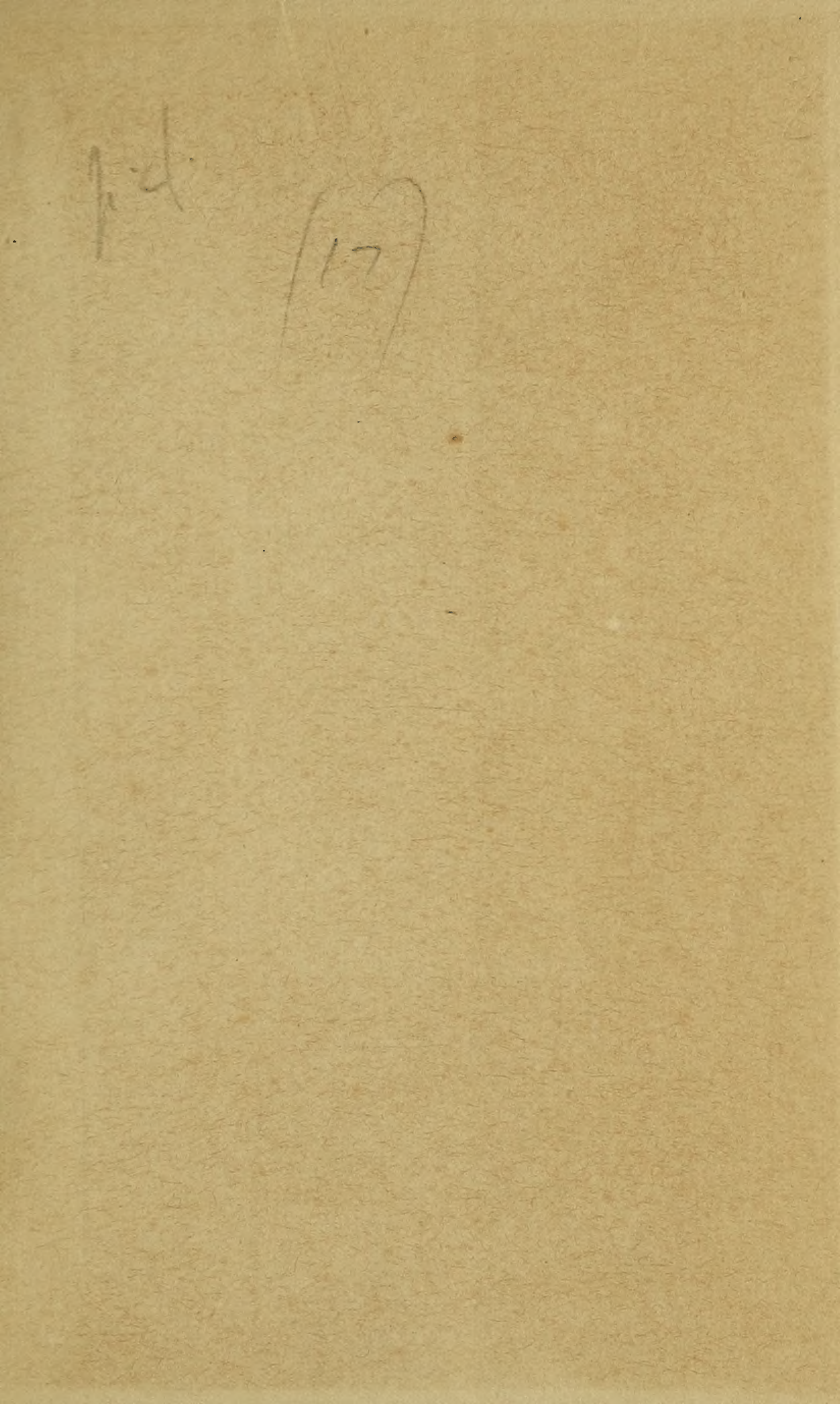
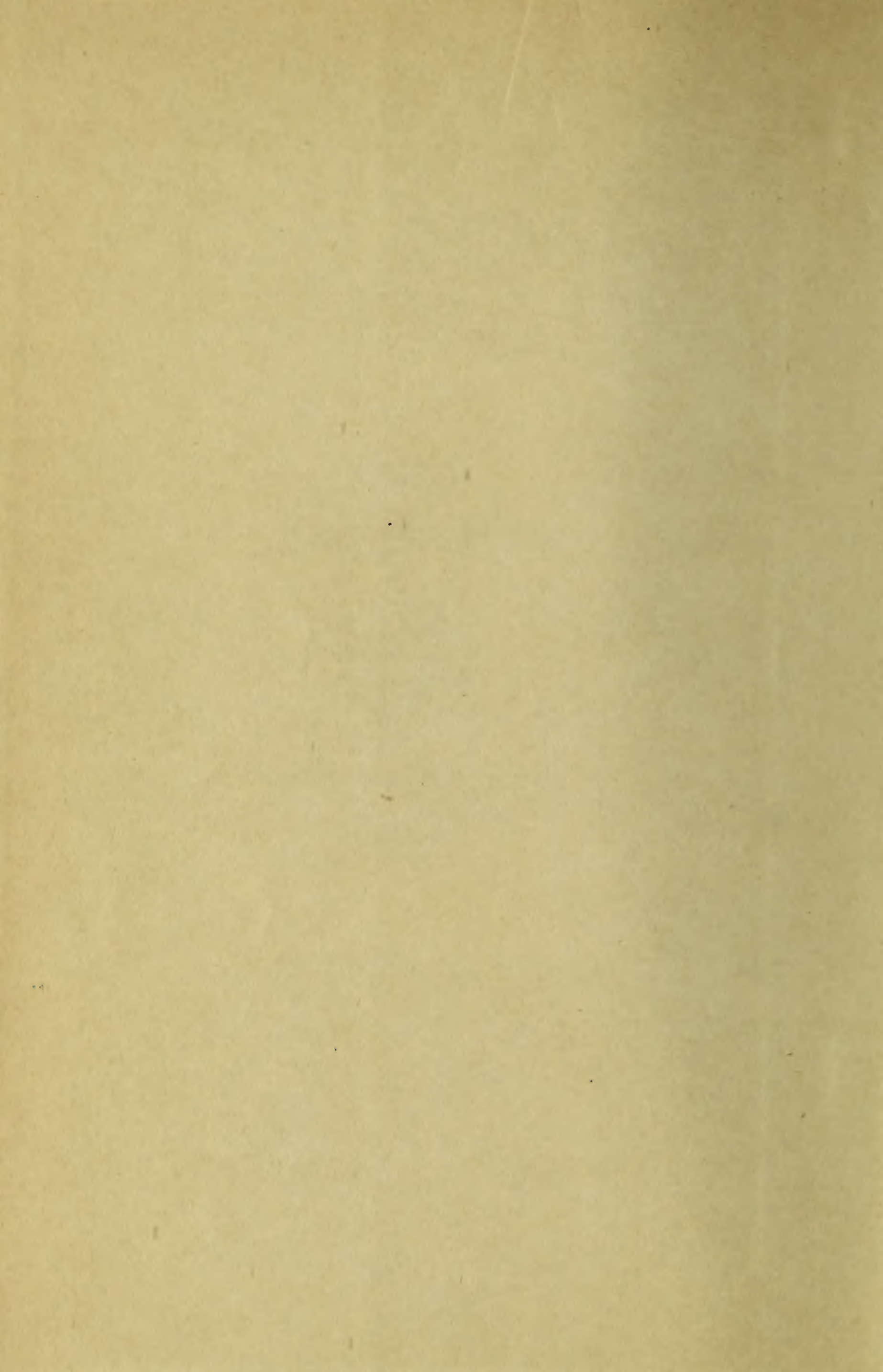
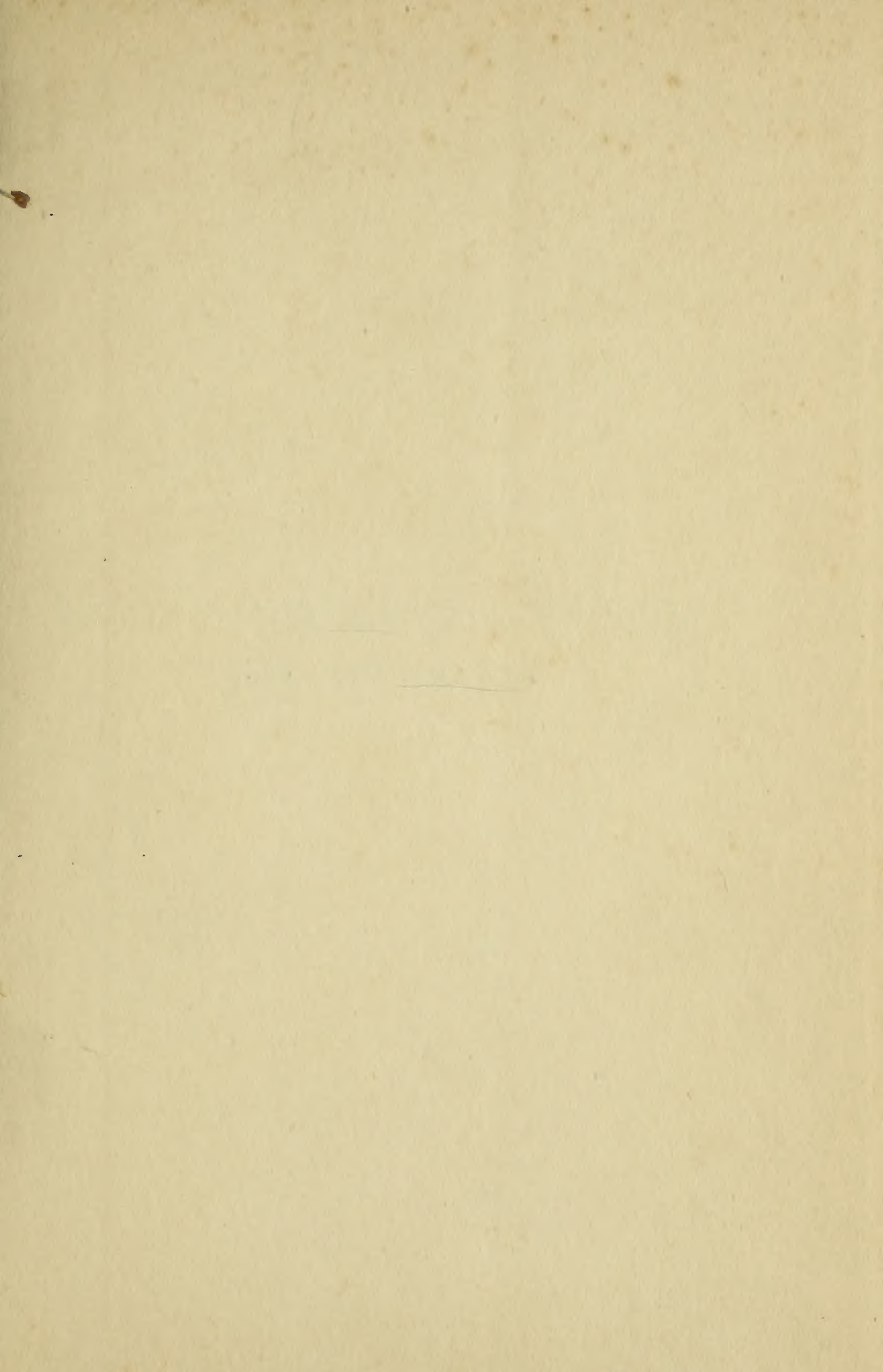
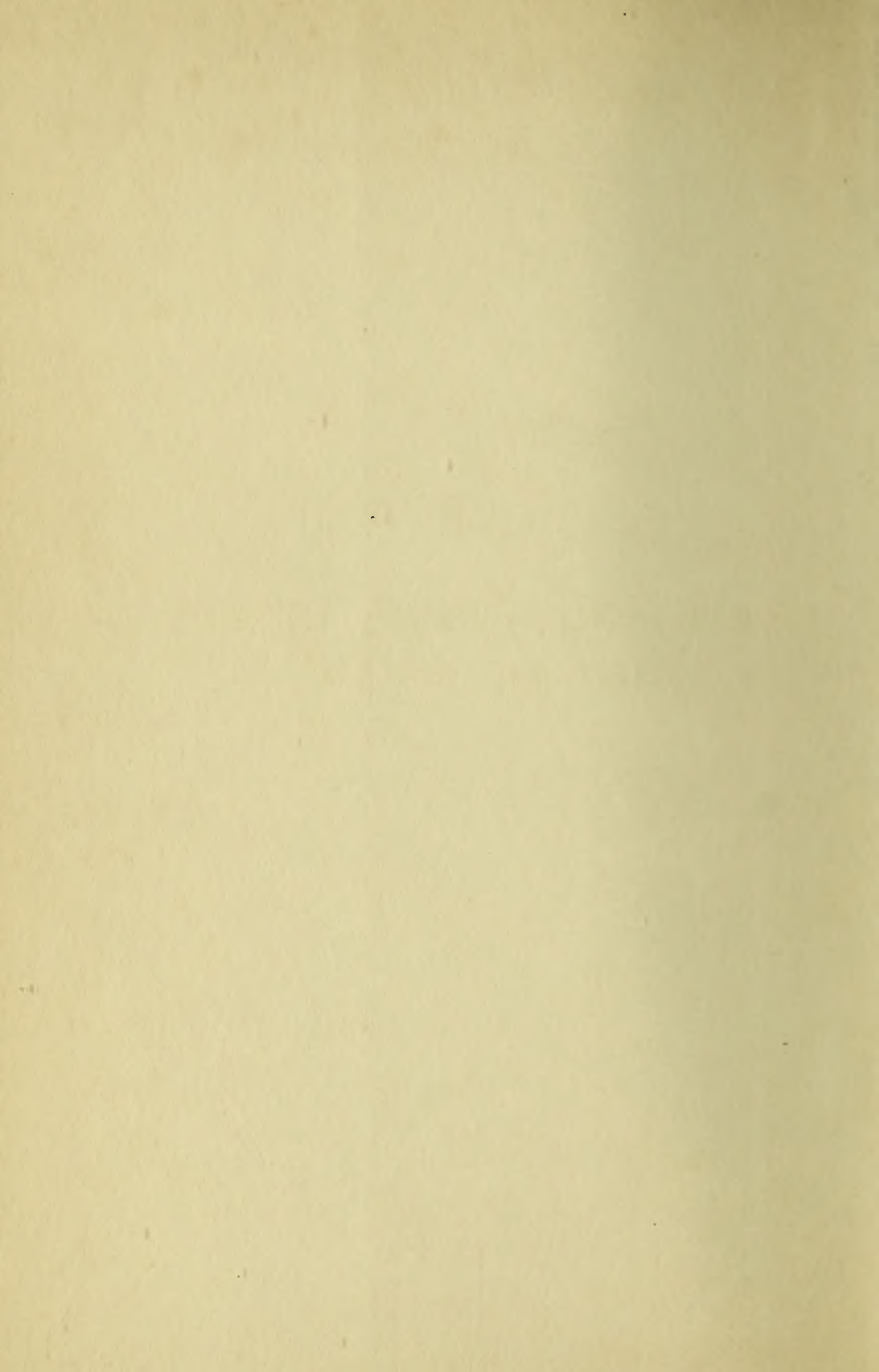
ISRAEL AND ASSYRIA *
IN THE TIME OF ISAIAH









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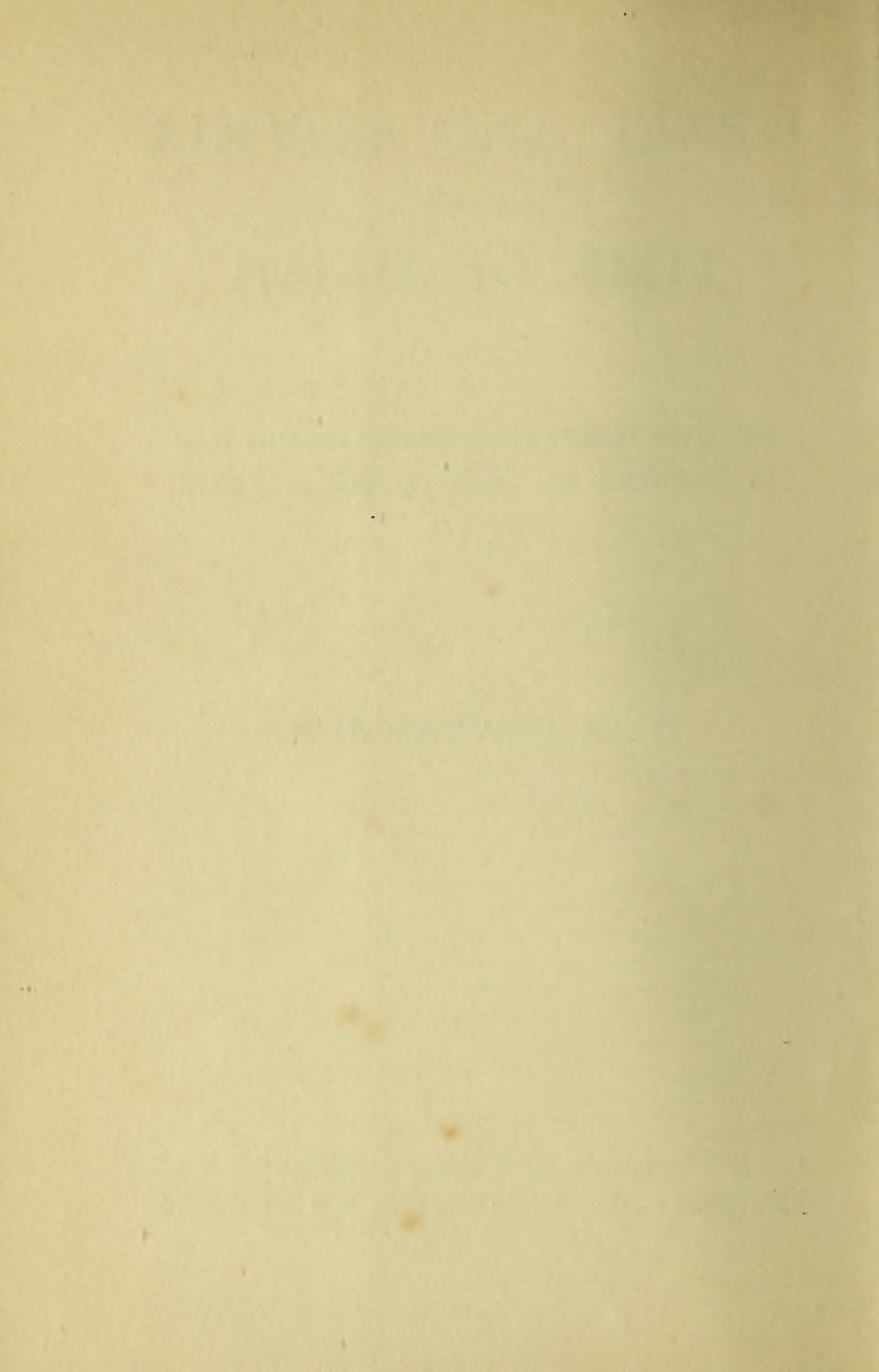
TIME OF ISAIAH

Being the History of the Period 740-701 B.C.
as illustrated by Chapters 1-40 of Isaiah

BY

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CONTENTS

Introduction

IT is not without reason that a large proportion of the Bible consists of History. The unchanging principles of Divine governance are displayed in the circumstances of each age; and just as light cannot be seen until it strikes upon some material object, so the ways of God towards men are to be learnt by studying them as manifested in a particular set of circumstances. Man learns the general principle by observing the particular instance.

Most of the first forty chapters of Isaiah combine to form a mirror which reflects God's treatment of His people during a period of exceptional importance and danger. If we put ourselves in the place of the Israelites of those days, we shall learn how God's will was revealed to them and thus acquire a deeper experience for our own case. Times may change and circumstances alter; yet God is eternally unchanged, man's nature is practically the same as it was three thousand years ago, many of the problems are still unsolved and the lessons still unlearned.

No attempt has been made in the present volume to deal with many important aspects of prophetic truth. For example, several passages are clearly Messaianic, and are best interpreted with reference to the coming Christ. Yet as this book is an attempt to explain a part of Isaiah's writings from the standpoint of a contemporary Jew, I have thought it

best to sacrifice what is to Christians the most obvious interpretation, for the one which must assuredly have appealed most to Isaiah's countrymen. For these same Scriptures in which Christians see so clearly portrayed the features of the Messiah, were originally written for Jews who, at that time at any rate, had practically no conception of a Messiah, who had little hope of a life beyond the grave (xxxviii. 18), and in whose eyes the reward for faithfulness to Jehovah generally consisted in mere material prosperity. Yet these first recipients of the sacred message found in it the consolation, encouragement and reproof which they needed, even though they failed to understand the fuller meaning which only the coming of Jesus Christ could completely reveal. Indeed it is a very debatable question, as to how far Isaiah himself realised the vast range of meaning which many of his writings bore (see Luke x. 24). That he was conscious of Inspiration is evident; for he both definitely claims it and also frequently represents words as uttered directly by Jehovah. But did he realise that prophecies primarily designed to meet the wants and difficulties of his own day, would find a second and spiritual fulfilment in a distant future; that words written for the men of his own nation, would, when applied to the Messiah, bear a message to people of all lands, thousands of years later?

But leaving the higher paths of Messaianic interpretation, I have confined myself to a lower course which is not, however, without use and interest; endeavouring to explain what meaning these writings originally bore for the Jew who first received them. Isaiah, though the greatest of Idealists, was also eminently practical. His writings do not deal with

vague generalities, but with the real problems of his own day; and these latter can only be understood by a study of the historical events of that time. Nor is it necessary, in this connection, to regard his writings necessarily as "prophecies" in the sense of predictions of the future. It is true that he often did forewarn his countrymen of what was likely to happen: but in the main, his prophecies were "*forth-tellings*" rather than "*fore-tellings*," and were written at the time of, or even after the event. Isaiah was the "mouth-piece" of God, communicating to Israel the lessons to be drawn from passing events. These lessons would have been of far less practical value for Isaiah's countrymen, if they had merely referred to some incidents which were about to occur in the indistinct future. Isaiah's writings only became eventually "prophetic" in the ordinary sense of the word, when, by a spiritual adaptation of their meaning, they found their final fulfilment in the advent of the Messiah.

It is essential to the study of Isaiah, to note certain characteristic doctrines which frequently assume very prominent positions. First among these is his doctrine of a Remnant. It recurs again and again, and forms the chief basis for that sanguine disposition which is so noticeable in Isaiah. Though it was clear that sin must be purified by suffering, yet affliction would never totally sweep away God's chosen people without leaving a Remnant behind to inherit the blessings promised by God to their ancestors. It seems probable that Isaiah regarded the captivity of the Northern Kingdom as one stage in the purification of Israel (see x. 20), to be followed by a further refining of the nation by means of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. But Judah would

not suffer total extinction. It contained a nucleus of a nobler race, a holy seed which would shoot up into a new plant, consecrated to Jehovah. Whatever trials might befall the people, however sharply the pruning-knife might be felt, yet only what was rotten and useless would be cut away. There would remain a purified Remnant, with unimpaired vigour and fitted to develop into a new nation free from the taint of faithlessness and enriched with material and spiritual blessings (xvii. 6; xxviii. 5).

Some passages require for their appreciation a knowledge of Isaiah's attitude towards Nature; *e.g.* xi. 6-9 and xxx. 23-26. The Jews of that age believed that Jehovah's favour or disapprobation was displayed towards them in their material prosperity or want; in other words, in the fertility or barrenness of their soil. Nor to people who had the vaguest possible notion of a future life, could the idea of reward or punishment take any other shape. But Isaiah idealises this conception of material retribution, until we may say that he regards Nature as sympathising with the moral well-being of the people rather than as rewarding it. The very exaggerations with which he describes the beneficent conditions of Nature, under which the regenerate people of the future were to live, transfer his conceptions into a higher sphere than that of mere reward or punishment. Thus the virtue of the people is not so much rewarded by, as reflected in the fertility of the land.

Thirdly, we must note the peculiar use which Isaiah makes of names. For him a name embodies an idea; the bearer of the name is a living witness to a doctrine. The son named "Shear-jashub" (vii. 3) would be a perpetual reminder to the Jews of

Isaiah's great doctrine of the survival of a Remnant. The doctrine of the Presence of Jehovah was embodied in the name Emmanuel (vii. 14-16). See also viii. 1-4.

Fourthly, Isaiah held that heathen nations were used by Jehovah as instruments in the fulfilment of His purposes towards Israel. This idea is especially developed in the case of Sennacherib, who is represented as an unconscious tool in the hand of a higher Power. (x. 15; xiv. 26; xxxvii. 26).

Fifthly, Isaiah based his hopes of a national regeneration, under the Divine Providence, upon the advent of a King. In other words, he expected the reformation to proceed from the royal court and extend downwards to the people. To some extent this process was effected under Hezekiah and again under Josiah. But how far short of the prophet's expectations such reformations actually fell, may be surmised from the subsequent course of events. The reform which starts from below among the mass of the people, and extends upwards to the courts of Kings, does not appear to have been contemplated by Isaiah. Yet that this is the only true method of reform, has been demonstrated by the experience of ages and the example of Jesus Christ, in whom coincided, in a marvellous way, the essential attributes of Kingship, and of Teacher and Saviour of the poor.

There remain to be considered Isaiah's political views. The great problem of his day was how best to resist the encroachments of Assyria. The method which, at one time, found most supporters, and which depended for success upon Egyptian assistance, was the one most emphatically condemned by Isaiah. For in the first place he perceived that Egypt was a decadent power and quite incapable of rendering any

effectual aid. To seek safety with a power which was strong enough to form the main object of Assyrian attack, and yet was too weak to protect its allies effectually, was rightly considered by Isaiah as only the way to court disaster. In the second place Isaiah objected to the alliance on the score of the traditional hostility between Israel and Egypt (cp. x. 20, 24, and 26). He considered that the Israelites ought never to forget the ill-treatment which their forefathers had suffered at the hands of the Egyptians: that they should not "stay upon him that smote them," but upon "the Lord, the Holy One of Israel." And this brings us to the third reason for Isaiah's condemnation of an Egyptian alliance. Trust in Egypt meant distrust of Jehovah's power to save. For while Isaiah thoroughly discountenanced any active hostilities such as would provoke the enemy to attack, yet he considered that, if assailed, his countrymen should trust in God and endure a siege. In the eyes of a pious Jew, to trust to the natural strength of Jerusalem was to trust in God Himself, whose city Jerusalem was (cp. Psalm xlviii). The hills which surrounded Jerusalem and gave it its splendid position for defence, were not merely the type (Psalm cxxv. 2), but also the channel of the Divine protection (xiv. 32). Fourthly and lastly, Isaiah disapproved of military ambition in a nation for which he perceived that God designed a destiny of peace. Judah was to be, not a great conqueror, but the religious centre of the world, a peacemaker among the nations and a teacher of the Knowledge of Jehovah. This idea is expressed in chapter ii. 1-5.

Finally, a word must be added about Isaiah's use of the terms Israel, and Judah. These are not

interchangeable names. The word Israel is generally used in its original application as the name of the entire nation, including all the twelve tribes which were descended from a common ancestor. When not so used, this name denotes the Northern Kingdom as opposed to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This is its meaning in vii. 1; viii. 18; ix. 8. In xxxi. 6, if the text of the Revised Version be kept, Israel must denote the whole nation; according to the marginal rendering, it will mean that Northern portion of it which had its capital at Samaria. The name Jacob is used as practically synonymous with Israel in the wider sense, but with a still more definite allusion to the common ancestry of the nation (xxix. 22, 23). *Zion*, of course, is only applied to Judah, or rather to Jerusalem itself, of which it forms the Western hill. The name carried with it memories of King David (2 Sam. v. 7-9); and it is generally used with a suggestion of the Divine mercy and favour which was extended to the "city of our God." (x. 24; xiv. 32).

Historical Summary

ASSYRIA proper was situated on the upper half of the river Tigris, and to the East of it as far as the Zagros Mountains of Media. On the South it was bounded by Babylonia, from which country the Assyrian people originally came (Gen. x. 11). The border line lay some distance below the confluence of the Lesser Zab and the Tigris. Westward the country stretched to the river Khabour, which is an Eastern tributary of the Euphrates. But the Assyrian Empire under the Kings of the seventh century stretched far beyond these narrow limits to Egypt, Arabia, Media and Lydia. The hold on the more distant countries, however, was often far from permanent. The military campaigns of an Assyrian monarch provided ample material for self-glorification ; but their effects on the conquered frequently did not survive the presence of the victorious army. Rebellions were frequent ; and the military occupation of a country had to be repeated at intervals in order to secure the subjection of the inhabitants and the due payment of the tribute. The Assyrians found it easy to conquer but hard to consolidate their conquests ; and the wholesale deportation of captive peoples to distant parts of the Empire, which was a method much in favour with Assyrian Kings, was but a rough attempt at solving the difficulty.

The Assyrian Empire.

The Israelites first came into contact with Assyria in the reign of Ahab, when they formed part of the confederate army under the Syrian King, Benhadad II. Though defeated in the field, they yet were successful in checking the advance of an Assyrian force under Shalmaneser II. (B.C. 854). Twelve years later Shalmaneser, who had during the interval made more than one unsuccessful attempt to conquer Syria, was fortunate in finding the Syrian Kingdoms disunited. Benhadad had been murdered by Hazael (2 Kings viii. 15). Ahab had fallen in battle (1 Kings xxii. 34 ff.); and his family had been exterminated by the zeal of Jehu (2 Kings ix. and x.). Consequently Hazael, the King of Syria, being unsupported by allies, was signally defeated and his capital, Damascus, was besieged. Meanwhile Jehu of Israel made peace with the conqueror and gave tribute.

Shalmaneser II. B.C. 860-825.

A century later (B.C. 745) a revolution set on the throne of Assyria the great Pul, or Tiglath-Pileser III, as he was called officially. His accession revived the military energies of his country, and before two years of his reign had passed, he was winning victories to the North of Syria. On this occasion Rezin of Damascus, and probably also Menahem of Samaria, gave tribute. As soon as Pul's back was turned, the Syrians revolted; but the capture of Arpad restored them to submission. Immediately after, however, rebellion broke out afresh, and this time the warlike Kingdom of Judah was involved. The year 738 B.C. saw the capture of Calno (Is. x. 9) and the defeat of Judah and its allies. Pul then annexed the country of Hamath, divided the land amongst his generals, and deported the inhabitants to other parts of the Empire. By

Syrian Conquests of Tiglath-Pileser III., B.C. 745-727.

these means he tried to make his conquests more permanent; but it is evident that he was not in a position to treat Judah in this way. Among those who brought tribute may be mentioned Rezin of Syria and Menahem of Israel. (2 Kings xv. 19, 20).

The prosperous reign of Uzziah, B.C. 792-740.

Uzziah, as the King of Judah is called in the Chronicles (2 Chron. xxvi.), or Azariah, as he is called in the Book of the Kings (2 Kings xv. 1-7), was an exceptionally vigorous monarch. He was successful in conflict with the Philistines and the Ammonites. His organisation of the army, his works of military engineering, both offensive and defensive, together with his patronage of the peaceful arts of husbandry combined to render his reign of fifty-two years (792-740 B.C.) a most prosperous one.

Jotham, B.C. 740-734.

In the year that Uzziah died Isaiah received his prophetic call. This was, perhaps, in the year 740 B.C.; but as Uzziah towards the close of his life was a leper, his son Jotham had been acting for some time as regent, before he became sole King (2 Chron. xxvi. 21). Under Jotham the military reputation of Judah was vigorously maintained. (2 Chron. xxvii.). But the reign of Jotham's son Ahaz (734-728 B.C.) opened disastrously for the Kingdom of Judah. Pekah of Israel united with Rezin of Syria to invade the Kingdom of Ahaz, with the design of deposing him in favour of the son of Tabeel (Is. vii. 6). The first important historical situation dealt with by Isaiah is this Syro-Ephraimitish invasion which was still further aggravated by attacks from the Philistines and the Edomites. The slaughter inflicted on the Jews was terrific; and enormous numbers of captives were carried away to Samaria, though they were afterwards released in deference to

The Syro-Ephraimitish Invasion, B.C. 734-5.

the strong feeling which existed against keeping slaves of Israelite race. (2 Chron. xxviii.). This attack on Judah was doubtless the result of the refusal of Ahaz and of his predecessor, Jotham, to join a league formed by Rezin and Pekah with the object of resisting the aggression of Assyria. But in spite of their victory the confederate kings were foiled in their designs; and Ahaz, when hard pressed, did not hesitate to apply to Pul for assistance, notwithstanding the certainty that his powerful ally would give him more trouble than that assistance was worth (2 Chron. xxviii. 20). The alliance, too, would open the way to Egypt, and a struggle between Assyria and Egypt was sure to be fraught with disaster for the intervening state of Judah (Is. vii. 18 ff.) For the time, however, the policy of Ahaz seemed to be successful. Rezin was defeated and shut up in Damascus "like a caged bird." Then came the turn of Pekah (2 Kings xv. 29). His land was spoiled and himself obliged to take refuge in Samaria. The victorious Pul then proceeded to attack in turn the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites and the Philistines. The last mentioned people relied on Egypt for succour and, as was usual, were grievously disappointed. Finally, after a two years' siege, Damascus was captured (732 B.C.); and here the Assyrian monarch held a great court at which Ahaz was obliged to be present as his humble dependent. The son and successor of Ahaz was Hezekiah.

Tiglath-Pileser III. invades Syria and Israel, B.C. 734-732.

In the kingdom of Israel Hoshea murdered Pekah and became King in his stead (2 Kings xv. 30), evidently with the consent of Assyria, since Pul takes the credit of establishing him on the throne. Two or three years later (727 B.C.) Pul himself died and

Shalmaneser IV., B.C. 727-722.

was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV. Hoshea, the King of Israel, then began to be restive in his allegiance, and an expedition was necessary to secure the tribute (2 Kings xvii. 3). In the following year (B.C. 724) encouraged by So, King of Egypt, he again revolted and was besieged in his capital of Samaria. Shalmaneser died during the course of the siege, and was succeeded in B.C. 722 by Sargon, one of his officers.

Fall of Samaria, B.C. 722.

The accession of the vigorous Sargon brought with it the capture of Samaria and the captivity of Israel (2 Kings xvii. 4-6). But the new King had also to deal with revolt in the subject country of Babylonia, where Merodach-Baladan had seized the crown. In 720 B.C. Sargon was back again at work in Palestine, destroying the rebel town of Aroer, turning Hamath into an Assyrian colony and finally inflicting a severe defeat on the Philistines and Egyptians at Raphia.

Sargon's campaign against Ashdod, B.C. 711.

During the next ten years Sargon was busy establishing the Assyrian power in other quarters; but in B.C. 711 he invaded Palestine, where a revolt was on foot, headed by the Philistine city of Ashdod and backed by promises of aid from Egypt. But when the crisis came, Egypt gave no help; Ashdod was taken and the revolt crushed.

Merodach-Baladan, B.C. 721-709.

To a period immediately preceding this revolt should be referred the embassy sent to Hezekiah by Merodach-Baladan, the rebellious prince of Babylon, who had reigned in defiance of Assyria since B.C. 721. To what extent Hezekiah fell in with the proposals of the Babylonian envoys, is not definitely stated; but we know that his attitude towards them was such as to lead to an angry scene between himself and the prophet Isaiah, who, of course, condemned

such interference as useless and foolhardy. But in spite of all his alliances, Merodach-Baladan was conquered in B.C. 710; his capital of Babylon was entered triumphantly by Sargon, who forthwith proclaimed himself King of the country; and in the following year the rebel himself and his family were captured in their retreat at the castle of Bit-yakin. Four years later Sargon who was already an old man and hardly equal to the tasks of Kingship, fell a victim to the assassin, and was succeeded by his son Sennacherib (B.C. 705).

Accession of Sennacherib, B.C. 705-681.

The first difficulties of the new monarch were with Babylon, where an usurper had seized the throne; only, however, to be himself deposed and murdered after a month's reign by Merodach-Baladan, who thus reappears after five years exile. Merodach-Baladan only enjoyed his success for nine months, and the year 703 B.C. again found him a fugitive.

Return of Merodach-Baladan, B.C. 704.

Towards the close of the following year (B.C. 702) took place the great Assyrian invasion of Palestine which occupies such a prominent place in the writings of Isaiah. The declining energies shown by the old King Sargon during the last few years of his reign had encouraged the more distant parts of the Assyrian Empire to throw off the yoke. As usual, the rebellion was supported by promises of Egyptian aid; a leading part was taken by Hezekiah of Judah and by the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Zidon. Sennacherib advanced through Syria and captured Zidon. Tyre seems to have been too strong for him to take, but his successful subjugation of the coast lands brought about the submission of most of the rebel states, with the exception of Judah. The Philistine cities were the next object of attack; and when

Invasion of Palestine, B.C. 701.

Sennacherib required the surrender of the former King of Ekron, who, on account of his friendliness towards Assyria, had been deposed and sent as a prisoner for safe keeping to Jerusalem, Hezekiah did not dare to refuse. On this occasion it appears that Egypt did send a force in support of the Ekronites; but it was defeated at Eltekeh, and Ekron fell into the hands of the Assyrians.

Then the Assyrians invaded Judah. The fenced cities, many of them doubtless the work of Jotham (2 Chron. xxvii. 4), were captured; multitudes were carried into captivity; and Hezekiah himself was shut up in Jerusalem "like a caged bird." While Sennacherib was assulting Lachish, the terrified Jewish King attempted to buy off his enemy, and for that purpose stripped the Temple at Jerusalem of its gold and silver (2 Kings xviii. 14-16). But this was not enough for the Assyrian King. He required an absolute submission, more especially as a struggle with Egypt was impending. But Hezekiah was spared the necessity of surrender. The mysterious catastrophe to the Assyrian host, which abruptly cut short the campaign of Sennacherib, is, of course, not mentioned in the Assyrian records. For these, in accordance with Sennacherib's vainglorious disposition, tell of victories only and not disasters. But the Greek historian Herodotus relates a story of how multitudinous mice once destroyed Sennacherib's army, which in its invasion of Egypt had reached Pelusium (Hdt. II. 141). The account given in the Bible points to a visitation of plague.

Overthrow of Sennacherib.

After this disaster, Sennacherib left Palestine alone. He carried on many wars elsewhere; and among them may be mentioned the capture of

Babylon which he gave up to pillage and destruction, burning the city with fire and flooding it with the waters of the canal. In 681 B.C. he was assassinated by his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer; but the Kingdom passed by right of conquest to a younger son named Esarhaddon, and the two murderers were compelled to flee.

Death of Sennacherib, B.C. 681.



Chronological Table

	B.C.
ACCESSION OF TIGLATH-PILESER III. IN ASSYRIA	745
DEATH OF UZZIAH OF JUDAH, AND CALL OF ISAIAH	740
SYRO-EPHRAIMITISH INVASION	734
CAPTURE OF DAMASCUS BY THE ASSYRIANS	732
ACCESSION OF SHALMANESER IV. IN ASSYRIA AND OF HEZEKIAH IN JUDAH	727
ACCESSION OF SARGON IN ASSYRIA—FALL OF SAMARIA	722
SARGON'S ASHDOD CAMPAIGN	711
OVERTHROW OF MERODACH-BALADAN	710
ACCESSION OF SENNACHERIB IN ASSYRIA	705
GREAT INVASION OF PALESTINE	701
ASSASSINATION OF SENNACHERIB	681



CHAPTER I

The Prophet's Call

VI. 1-13

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his [1]train filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: [2]the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a [3]live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin [4]purged. 8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. 9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye [5]indeed, but understand not; and see ye [5]indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and [6]understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. 11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, 12 and the LORD have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. 13 [7]And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be [8]eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, [9]whose [10]stock remaineth, when they [11]are felled; so the holy seed is the [10]stock thereof.

1 Or, *skirts*
2 Heb. *the fulness of the whole earth is his glory*
3 Or, *hot stone*
4 Or, *expiated*
5 Or, *continually*
6 Or, *their heart should understand*
7 Or, *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten up*
8 Or, *burnt*
9 Or, *whose substance is in them*
10 Or, *substance*
11 Or, *cast their leaves*

UZZIAH, or Azariah, King of Judah, died probably in the year B.C. 740. For some years before his death he had been a leper, and had lived by himself in a lazar-house, while the kingdom was governed by his son Jotham. In that year Pul and his Assyrians had reduced Arpad,

and the storm clouds of invasion, which were destined to burst with continually recurring violence on the land of Palestine, were already gathering fast on the northern horizon. It was a fitting moment for the call of the prophet, whose work was to direct his countrymen to Jehovah as the true source of protection during their times of danger.

1 The scene is in the temple at Jerusalem. Upon a lofty throne is seated Jehovah, the ample folds of whose royal mantle cover the whole temple floor. 2 Above the mantle there hover, each one upborne on two of his six wings, choirs of celestial beings. 3 Their song of adoration is chanted antiphonally, one to the other responding "Holy, holy, holy." As the melody of this "Trisagion" rolls through the 4 temple, the door posts tremble and the altar of incense breaks into a cloud of smoke.

5 The vision of this glory wakes in the prophet a torturing sense of his own unworthiness. Not only is he conscious of the uncleanness of his own lips; the infection from the people with whom he identifies himself also needs cleansing through the 6-7 touch of one of those hot coals which in the temple service were brought from the great Altar of Sacrifice outside to kindle the incense within the holy place (Levit. xvi. 12, 13).

8-9 Thus purified, Isaiah offered his services and heard the strange conditions of his mission. His work was to tell the people that their national policy, 10-12 their religious and social life were based on a blind indifference to their true interests. Cassandra-wise the prophet's message was doomed to be disregarded, and the only end in view was desolation to the land 13 and exile to its inhabitants. Yet, even so, a ray of comfort was left; the disaster need not be final. A

new Israel might spring up from the ruin of the old, just as green shoots grow from the stump of a tree after it has been felled. This doctrine of a "Remnant" surviving judgment is very characteristic of the prophecies of Isaiah.

CHAPTER II

The Internal Condition of Judah

THESE prophecies were probably written mostly between the years 740 and 735 B.C. They bear on the social and religious condition of Judah during the prosperous reigns of Uzziah and Jotham. At the close of this period there came to the throne of Judah the youthful Ahaz, whose weakness and inexperience encouraged his neighbours, Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria, to combine against him. Ahaz suffered a severe defeat, and was constrained to apply for aid to Assyria (2 Chron. xxviii.).

I. 2—9. The Penalty of Faithlessness.

1 THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. 2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have [1]nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: *but* Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly: they have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged *and gone* backward. 5 [2]Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? [3]the whole head is sick, and [3]the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; *but* wounds, and bruises, and [4]festering sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil. 7 Yonr country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, [5]as overthrown by strangers. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left as as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. 9 Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

1 Or, *made great and exalted* See Ezek xxxi. 4.

2 Or, *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt, &c.*

3 Or, *every*

4 Or, *fresh stripes*

5 Or, *as the overthrow of strangers*

The allusion to the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion in verse 7, as well as the general nature of the whole passage, proves it to have been among the last in the group of writings to which it belongs, though its character of summary has procured for it its present position at the head of the group.

The prophet sums up the charges which he brings 2 against the people of Judah. He appeals to heaven and earth to witness Israel's apostasy from Jehovah. The people have not shown even the ordinary affection and fidelity of a brute beast. Sinners 3 themselves, and the children of sinners, they have 4 by their faithlessness at last provoked Jehovah to anger and to punishment. Yet punishment has 5 only the effect of making them worse. The disease has gone so far that there is no remedy. Then, 6 turning from figure to fact, the prophet points to the land desolated by invasion. Jerusalem alone 7 escaped (2 Kings xvi. 5). Yet even it had been 8 besieged, so that it resembled one of those isolated towers erected on poles in order to guard a vineyard against marauding animals and men. Had not a 9 "remnant" been left, they would have suffered the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, proverbial types of cities utterly destroyed for their iniquity. (Gen. xix. 24).

There should be noticed (1) the conception of the Israelitish nation standing in an especial relation to Jehovah, and receiving especial benefits from Him, and yet proving traitor to its privileges (cp V. 1-7); (2) that Israel's case is hopeless. No punishment will avail to cure. For this Isaiah had been prepared on the occasion of his call (VI. 9 ff); (3) What saves the prophet from despair is the conviction that, though the greater part of the people are

so corrupt as to call down destruction upon themselves, yet there will survive a "remnant." This "remnant" is in the first instance Judah among the tribes of Israel; but eventually only the truly religious among the Jews themselves (xxxiii. 14 ff).

I. 10—15. Religious Insincerity.

10 Hear the word of the Lord, ye [1]rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the [2]law of our God, ye people of 11 Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, 12 or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come [3]to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? 13 Bring no more [4]vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—[5]I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn 14 meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a [6]trouble unto me; I am 15 weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

[1] Or, *judges*
[2] Or, *teaching*
[3] Or, as otherwise read, *to see my face*
[4] Heb. *an oblation of vanity*
[5] Or, *I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting*
[6] Or, *cumbrance*

11 This passage proves that the services of the 13 Temple were duly conducted and religious festivals scrupulously observed, at the same time that the most heathen rites were being carried on elsewhere (2 Chron. xxviii. 2-4). Idolatry, however, was not 12 in the mind of the prophet so much as the moral depravity which rendered the worship of Jehovah a hollow mockery. In such a case worshippers are regarded as unwelcome intruders vexatiously trampling the Temple courts. This hypocritical combina- 13 (end)-15 tion of assumed religious zeal and of iniquity and bloodguiltiness in ordinary life, was unendurable.

I. 16—20. A Call to Reform.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from 17 before mine eyes; cease to do evil: learn to do well; seek judgment, [1]relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.
18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If 19 ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of 20 the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

[1] Or, *set right the oppressor*

Observe that the crying evil of the day was a selfish disregard for the weak, a trampling on the rights of the unprotected. This perversion of justice at the expense of the weak and in the interests of the strong has always been a characteristic failing among Eastern nations. Thus the prophets continually denounce it, while Job takes especial credit to himself for having protected the weak and oppressed in the days of his prosperity (Job xxix., 11—16). 17 18

The idea of a legal process in which Jehovah on the one side and His people on the other, plead against each other on the question of their differences ("let us reason together") is repeated elsewhere (xli. 1 and 21; xliii. 26; Jer. ii. 9 and 35). Finally, Jehovah is still willing to forgive and restore to the enjoyment of blessing. Estrangement with its consequent penalties will be entirely the fault of the people themselves. 19 20

I. 21—31. Purification Through Destruction.

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! she that was full of judgement! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. 22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with 23 water. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge 25 me of mine enemies: and I will [1]turn my hand upon thee, and [2]thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy [3]tin: 26 and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning; afterward thou shalt be called The city of righteousness, the faithful 27 city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgement, and [4]her converts with 28 righteousness. But the [5]destruction of the transgressors and the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall 29 be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the [6]oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be 30 confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as [7]an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no 31 water. And the strong shall be as tow, and his work as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

1 Or, *bring my hand again*
2 Heb. *as with lye*
3 Or, *alloy*
4 Or, *they that return of her*
5 Heb. *breaking*
6 Or, *terebinths*
7 Or, *a terebinth*

21-23 The degree of faithlessness to God to which Judah had sunk, as exemplified in the perversion of justice and the frequent "judicial murder" of those not not rich enough to protect themselves by bribing the corrupt judges, was the more fearful by 24 reason of the contrast with the past. Not reform is in the mind of the prophet now. The princes who persist in the old crimes of accepting bribes and oppressing the weak, are now the enemies of a God 25 who is determined to take vengeance! Zion will be restored not by the reformation of her rulers, but by their extermination. Through her iniquities, 27 Zion had been, as it were, sold into slavery with a stranger. But now she was to be bought back and the price of her redemption was the "judgment," and the condition of the return for those that did return of her ("her converts") was the "righteousness," the establishment of which would follow on the destruction of the sinners. For the Jewish law of redemption, see Leviticus xxv. 47ff. Then follows the threefold denunciation of rebels (transgressors)—sinners—forsakers, as in verses 2—4 of this 29, 30 chapter. These will perish, like as the sacred trees, under which they sacrificed to their idols, or as the gardens, in which they practised heathenish rites, will wither when no longer tended by their idolatrous devotees. Together shall be destroyed the idolator and the idol which has caused his ruin.

26 As the crime of these men was judicial and political corruption, so the Great Restoration was to bring back the just judges and upright councillors who used to flourish "at the beginning." In other words, Isaiah took for his ideal the restoration of the Past, and it has been considered that this political ideal based on the return of what was past,

is only another proof of the early date at which this passage was written. Later on Isaiah fixed his gaze on a glorious Future.

II. 1—5. A Vision of Judah as the Teacher of the Nations.

1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
2 [1]And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established [2]in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow
3 unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth [3]the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
4 And he shall judge [4]between the nations, and shall [5]reprove many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.
5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

1 See Micah iv. 1—3
2 Or *at the head*
3 Or, *instruction*
4 Or, *among*
5 Or, *decide concerning*

To realise the magnificence of the conception contained in these verses, it should be set in contrast with the low standard of political or military aggrandisement which was most probably the ambition of the Jews of that period. To a nation accustomed to the military activities and successes of Uzziah and Jotham, and not above displaying an infatuated over-confidence in its own warlike prowess (2 Chron. xxv. 17-22), the prophet here presents the possibility of a far nobler kind of pre-eminence. To be the religious centre, the moral leader and teacher of the nations—surely, this was worth the sacrifice of military ambition! To be the arbiter and peacemaker of the world, and, in place of a material dominion based on force, to gain a spiritual ascendency due to possessing and being able to impart the knowledge of the true God—this was the glorious destiny, for which the house of Jacob was summoned to qualify itself.

II. 6—9. The Threefold Iniquity of Jacob.

6 For thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be filled *with customs* from the east, and *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of strangers. 7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. 8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. 9 And the mean man [1]is bowed down, and the great man [2]is brought low: therefore forgive them not.

[1] Or, *boweth down*
[2] Or, *humbleth himself*

The prophets passes abruptly from the ideal to the stern reality. In verses 4 and 28 of the preceding chapter mention was made of those who forsook the Lord; in this passage the Lord has forsaken the house of Jacob. No longer regarded as the source of spiritual influence, it stands convicted of three great sins (1) witchcraft (2) the pride of wealth (3) idolatry.

6 (1) The extent of the fascination exercised on the minds of the Israelites by attempts to communicate with the unseen world, may be gauged by the rigorous penalties denounced against those who practised the occult arts (Ex. xxii. 18: Levit. xx. 6 and 27; Deut. xviii. 9-14) and the survival of the evil in spite of attempts to eradicate it (1 Sam. xv. 23; xxviii. 3, ff.). That it was a common practice in the time of Isaiah to enquire of departed spirits, may be gathered from chapter viii. 19. As is usually the case, the necromancers and magicians of Palestine were mostly foreigners.

7 (2) In thus denouncing the wealth of Judah, Isaiah bears testimony to the material prosperity enjoyed under Uzziah and Jotham; and in mentioning chariots and horses he witnesses also to the military activity of those Kings. Horses were regarded only as animals to be used for warlike purposes, and the possession of them in large

numbers as a sign of military pride and power. They fell under condemnation also as tending to win away the confidence which should more properly be reposed in Jehovah Himself (Ps. xx. 7; Prov. xxi. 31). Though no specific crime is mentioned here in connection with the possession of wealth and the materials of war, it is easy to see that pride and self-confident recklessness resulting in forgetfulness of God may very well have been its result.

8 (3) Finally, the prophet notes that the practice of idolatry extended through all classes of society, high and low alike. "Therefore forgive them not."

II. 10—17. The Downfall of Pride.

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the glory 11 of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be 12 exalted in that day. For [1]there shall be a day of the LORD of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it 13 shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; 14 and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up; 15 and upon every lofty tower, and upon every 16 fenced wall; and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant 17 [2]imagery. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

[1] Or, *the LORD of hosts hath a day*

[2] Or, *watch-towers*

10, 11 But the fear of the Divine Majesty was destined to humble Pride in the Day of Jehovah's exaltation when once haughty heads stooped into the dust, to crawl for safety into the caves of the rock!

12-14 The word "Day," from meaning a day when great issues were decided, came to be used as equivalent to "day of battle." Hence by the "day of the Lord of Hosts," must be understood the "day of battle in which the Lord of Hosts shall overthrow his enemies." Such a victory won by the Lord was confidently regarded by the Jews as

certain to be no less a triumph for the Lord's chosen people; but the prophet points out that in that "Day" the Lord will fight against all who are proud and haughty, and thus implies that the Jews by their pride had rendered themselves liable to the overthrow which they fondly imagined would be inflicted only upon their enemies in the coming "Day of the Lord of Hosts." The menace is the more effective for being indirect. An instructive parallel is to be found in Amos v. 18.

15 The prophet then proceeds to mention some of the objects evoking that haughty spirit of which he proclaims the downfall. In verse 15 he alludes to the military defences of the kingdom, the works which Uzziah and Jotham had constructed (2 Chron. xxvi. 9; xxvii. 3 and 4). In verse 16 he is doubtless 16 thinking of the foreign trade carried on by the Phœnicians with distant ports such as the Spanish Tartessus, which had enriched the Kingdom of Judah; while by "pleasant imagery" or "pictures" may be meant either richly wrought objects of art and luxury, or perhaps the pleasing landscapes of Palestine, rich in the signs of fertility and prosperity.

II. 18—22. The Overthrow of Idolatry.

18 And the idols shall utterly 19 pass away. And men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the [1]earth, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty, when he riseth to shake mightily 20 the earth. In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold which they made for him to worship, to the moles and to the 21 bats; to go into the caverns of the rocks, and into the clefts of the ragged rocks, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake mightily 22 the earth. [2]Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

1 Heb. *dust*

2 The Sept. omits this verse

Allusions are found elsewhere to an earthquake which occurred during the reign of Uzziah. Amos dates his prophecies as being delivered two years before the earthquake (Am. i. 1), and there is

another reference to be found in Zechariah xiv. 5. It is evident, therefore, that an earthquake, of a severity sufficient to impress deeply the imagination of the people, took place not long before Isaiah delivered this prophecy, and it is probable that he is alluding in it to that earthquake. The terror of 19 the people seeking safety in clefts of the rocks is vividly imagined, and there is a grim irony displayed in the idea of men who refused to give up their idols for any better reason, being compelled to throw them 20 away for the benefit of the vermin infesting their deserted dwellings when they fled to the caves to save 21 their lives. In the last verse the prophet gives vent 22 to the contempt he feels for such despicable people.

III. 1—15. Disorganisation of the State.

1 For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay 2 of water; the mighty man and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the diviner, and the 3 [1]ancient; the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning [2]artificer, and the skilful enchanter. 4 And I will give children to be their princes, and [3]babes shall rule over 5 them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour; the child shall behave himself proudly against the [1]ancient, and the base against the honourable. 6 When a man shall take hold of his brother in the house of his father, *saying*, Thou hast clothing, be thou our [4]ruler, and let this ruin be under thy 7 hand: in that day shall he lift up *his voice*, saying, I will not be [5]an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: ye shall not make me ruler of the people. 8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD to provoke the 9 eyes of his glory. [6]The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have [7]rewarded evil 10 unto themselves. Say ye of the righteous, that *it shall be* well *with him*: for they shall eat the fruit 11 of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be* ill *with him*: for the [8]reward of his hands shall 12 be [9]given him. As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and [10]destroy the way of thy 13 paths. The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the [11]peoples. 14 The LORD will enter into judgement with the elders of his people, and the princes thereof: It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard: the spoil of the poor is in your houses: 15 what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

1 Or, *elder*
2 Or, *charmer*
3 Or, *with childishness shall they rule over them*
4 Or, *judge*
5 Heb. *a binder up*
6 Or, *Their respecting of persons doth, &c.*
7 Or, *done*
8 Or, *doing*
9 Heb. *done to him*
10 Heb. *swallow up*
11 Or, *people*

In the preceding passages there have been few opportunities for fixing accurately the date of their composition. Except in the case of I. 1-9, there have appeared no traces of any disaster in war such as the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion ; and it may therefore fairly be concluded that most of the first two chapters were written previous to the year of the invasion. The fact that in II. 18-22 an earthquake rather than a military disaster was selected as a type of God's vengeance; the continual denunciation of pride based on prosperity and power ; these things point to a period when the resources and wealth of Judah were still unimpaired by any reverse; in fact, to the interval between the call of the prophet in 740 B.C. and the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion of 735 B.C.

But in the third chapter there begin to appear evident allusions to the misfortunes which attend 1 invasion. The horrors of famine were added to the disorganisation of social order, the breaking down of authority and the absence of able political leaders. 2 The fearful disaster described in 2 Chron. xxviii. 5-8 had swept away the best in every profession and calling—soldier, judge, prophet, counsellor, 3 officer, workman, and magician. Those who were 4 left to carry on the Government in this state of anarchy were mere boys whose claim to authority 5 consisted in the arrogant disrespect with which they treated their elders. The position of ruler, so far 6, 7 from being an enviable one, was everywhere avoided by those whom a better material condition seemed 8 to qualify for the task. That the iniquity and godlessness of the people themselves were the cause 9 of all that ruin, was clear from the expression of reckless impiety and impudent obstinacy which was

imprinted on every face. Their case suggested the parallel of Sodom and Gomorrah (I. 10) cities which reaped in their own utter destruction the harvest of their iniquities. So too must men now also eat the fruit of good or evil, according as they have sown righteousness or iniquity. 10-11

Again the prophet laments the youthful incapacity of the Jewish rulers, and their abuse of power. King Ahaz himself was only twenty years old when he came to the throne, and he was probably under the influence of the women of his palace. Again, too, is repeated the old accusation of oppression and the accumulation of wealth by extortion on the part of the rulers of the people. 12 13-15

III. 16—IV. 1. The Vanity and Extravagant Display of the Women.

16 Moreover the LORD said, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: 17 therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts. 18 In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their anklets, and the [1]cauls, and the 19 crescents; the pendants, 20 and the [2]bracelets, and the mufflers; the head-tires, and the ankle chains, and the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the 21 amulets; the rings, and 22 the nose jewels; the festival robes, and the mantles, and the shawls, 23 and the satchels; the hand mirrors, and the fine linen, and the turbans, and 24 the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet spices there shall be rottenness; and instead of a girdle a rope; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth: branding in-25 stead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy [3]mighty 26 in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall be [4]desolate and sit upon the ground. 1 And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name; take thou away our reproach.

1 Or, *networks*
2 Or, *chains*
3 Heb. *might*
4 Or, *emptied*

The moral degeneracy of the times was shown in the excessive finery of personal adornment assumed 16-23

by the women. The number and intricacy of these aids to luxury and beauty defy analysis. Their charms were still more effectively set off by the affected manners of the wearers. A more trenchant satire on the degenerate ladies of fashion can hardly be imagined.

24 But the prophet has Slavery in view as the doom of these vain women! Instead of a richly-wrought girdle there is in store for them the rope by which their captor binds them to prevent escape. Instead of sweet perfumes, there will be the fœtid odour of neglect. The slaves will have their hair closely shaved off; their clothing will be of the coarsest; and on their fair skins will be branded with a hot iron the hateful symbol of slavery. Indeed there was little consideration shown in ancient times to captives taken in war! The prophecy is fully justified by the notice in 2 Chron. xxviii. 8, which relates how the Israelites carried away into slavery, after their invasion of Judah, two hundred thousand of their Jewish brethren, "women, sons, and daughters"; though the historian goes on to relate that these captives were eventually restored. The
26 prophet displays the picture of one of these desolate slave women, with the memory of her luxury and her happiness in the past, sinking down to the ground in despair, as she realises her miserable fate.
iv. 1 Those who escape captivity are threatened with the childlessness which is felt to be such a disgrace to
iii. 25 an Eastern woman. Nearly all the men have been
iv. 1 slain in the war; but rather than suffer the reproach of childlessness, the women will maintain themselves without expense to a husband, if only they can persuade the few remaining men to take away their shame by marriage.

IV. 2—6. A Glorious Future for the Survivors.

2 In that day shall the [1]branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the [2]land shall be [3]excellent and comely 3 for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written [4]among the living in Jerusalem: 4 when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the [5]spirit of judgment, and by the [5]spirit of burning. 5 And the LORD will create over [6]the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for over all the glory *shall be spread* a canopy. 6 And there shall be a pavilion for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain.

1 Or, *shoot* Or, *sprout*
2 Or, *earth*
3 Or, *majestic*
4 Or, *unto life*
5 Or, *blast*
6 Or, *every dwelling place*

Here is expressed the confident expectation that a Remnant will survive the fiery ordeal to which Judah must be subjected. This Remnant, like a young shoot sprouting up again from a felled tree (cp. vi. 13), will be beautiful and purified from sin; and then the presence of Jehovah will be manifested to His people as in the days of old, when "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light" (Ex. xiii. 21). By day the cloud will prove a fitting canopy of state to veil the glory of God's majesty; and a shelter from heat and storm.

V. 1—7. A Song of Disappointed Expectations.

1 Let me sing [1]for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved had a vineyard in [2]a very fruitful hill: 2 and he [3]made a trench about it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a [4]winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, 5 brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be [5]eaten up; I will break down the fence thereof, and it shall be trodden 6 down: and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers

1 Or, *of*
2 Heb. *a horn, the son of oil*
3 Or, *digged it*
4 Or, *winefat*
5 Or, *burnt*

and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah [6]his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgement, but behold [7]oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

6 Heb. *the plant of his delight* 7 Or, *shedding of blood*

This poem expresses under the figure of a vineyard the failure of Judah to profit by its exceptional advantages, or to satisfy the reasonable demands made upon it in consequence of its privileged treatment by Jehovah. The desolation of the vineyard represents the devastation of the land of Judah by invasion, regarded as a punishment for not realising its obligations. The parable needs little explanation beyond what is given in the text in verse 7.

The construction of a tower was in order to accommodate men for the purpose of watching against incursions of animals or robbers (cp. i. 8). The owner in his fond expectation of produce had been careful to build also a winepress for the grapes which he was destined never to receive. Compare our Lord's use of a similar parable (Matth. xxi. 33 ff.), which was no doubt suggested by this passage.

THE SEVEN WOES. V. 8-24; X. 1 and 2.

(1) ON THE APPROPRIATION OF LAND. Ver. 8-10.

8 Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst 9 of the land! In mine ears, *saith* the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even 10 great and fair, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a [1]homer of seed shall yield *but* an ephah.

1 See Ezek. xlv. 11.

The Israelites were by nature an agricultural people and clung affectionately to the possession of their ancestral plots of land, expulsion from which was deemed a terrible wrong, since the complete

alienation of that land was forbidden by law (Levit. xxv. 23). With an utter disregard for justice the wealthy of Isaiah's day expelled the peasant proprietor and appropriated his land, in order to satisfy their selfish greed for large estates. This was the sin of which Ahab was guilty, when he contrived the death of Naboth that he might obtain his vineyard (1 Kings xxi.).

The prophet here proclaims that the penalty for unlawful land-grabbing would be the destruction of all that made the land worth having. Humble 8 farmers had been ejected in order to gratify the land-lust of the wealthy, and the peasant population of the country was rapidly disappearing. But the 9 time was coming when Palestine would be devastated by invasion, and then the land would be barren and uninhabited indeed! Ten acres of vine- 10 yard would produce only eight gallons of wine, while from eighty gallons of seedcorn would be harvested one-tenth only of that amount. Such land would bring but little profit to the owners who had won it by unlawful means.

(2) ON RIOTING AND DRUNKENNESS. Ver. 11 AND 12.

11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine 12 inflame them! And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are *in* their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither have they considered the operation of his hands.

Not only at nightly revels, but all day long these drunkards indulge their craving for strong drink. They carry their debauches far into the night, and when, violent and quarrelsome, they break up for a time their drinking bouts, the early morning finds them once again yielding to their ruling passion for

alcohol. They have no thought for the consequences that may follow at the hands of Jehovah. The same sin is spoken of in ver. 22 and again in xxviii. 7 and 8.

PARENTHESIS PRONOUNCING JUDGMENT ON THE FOREGOING SINS. Ver. 13-17.

13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, for lack of knowledge: and [1]their honourable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with 14 thirst. Therefore [2]hell hath enlarged her desire, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their [3]pomp, and he that rejoiceth among them, descend into 15 *it*. And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes of the lofty are 16 humbled: but the LORD of hosts is exalted in judgment, and God the Holy One is sanctified in 17 righteousness. Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and the waste places of the fat ones shall [4]wanderers eat.

1 Heb. *their glory are men of famine*
2 Or, *the grave* Heb. *Sheol* See Gen. xxxvii. 35.
3 Or, *tumult*
4 Or, *strangers*

13 During prosperity excessive indulgence left no room for sober reflection about the consequences; in captivity they suffer both hunger and thirst as a 14, 15 punishment for their previous abuse of food and wine. In verse 14 there is drawn a contrast between the luxurious magnificence of their former revellings and the all-devouring ruin which has taken its place. Before—the pomp and glory of music and feasting; 16 after—the misery and humiliation of slavery! Yet the downfall of these sinners will prove the exaltation of the God who is honoured by judgment and righteousness and who has been dishonoured by their iniquity.

17 Secondly there is assigned the fitting penalty for the tyrannical ejection of peasants to satisfy the rich man's greed for land. The rich had desired a magnificent loneliness in the midst of their wide domains, and lonely those domains would be; but it would be the desolation left in the track of an invader, uncultivated and broken only by grazing sheep and nomad shepherd.

(3) ON INDULGENCE IN SIN. Ver. 18, 19.

18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: 19 that say, Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!

Here is denounced a blind persistence in evil 18 courses; a being "harnessed to sin," so that indulgence is without check and without misgiving. As animals are bound to the cart they draw, so that they are compelled to take it wherever they go, nor can they rid themselves of its weight; so are sinners tightly bound to their sins by the cords of a thoughtless, obstinate folly which hardens them against all the sobering influences of conscience or advice. To this was added a mocking sceptism 19 which scornfully rejected the idea of any punishment descending from God upon their crimes.

(4) ON MORAL BLINDNESS. Ver. 20.

20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

This is perhaps the Old Testament equivalent for what is called in the New "the sin against the Holy Ghost." It implies the distortion or destruction of all moral sense, and is to the soul what colour-blindness is to the eye. It involves a complete inability to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, and is the final result of a course of stifling conscience, and indulgence in acknowledged sin. Doubtless the men here denounced, having a lie in their own souls, misrepresented everything, political and religious, to themselves as well as to others. In their worst actions they saw no harm, while righteousness and judgment in other men seemed mere folly or worse.

(5) On intellectual pride. Ver. 21.

21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

A claim to superior knowledge, and to a superior practical sagacity led to the rejection of the prophet's advice and the neglect of his warnings. To such conceited counsellors as these was due the ill-starred plan of Ahaz of appealing for aid to Assyria against Israel and Syria.

(6) On drunkenness and judicial corruption. Vers. 22, 23.

22 Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle 23 strong drink: which justify the wicked for a reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

22 In this passage are represented the seasoned topers who gauged their own valour by their capacity for imbibing long draughts of intoxicating liquor, and 23 who despised men with a weaker head than their own. To such magistrates a bribe to pervert justice was irresistible, and the righteous man who failed to provide the necessary bribe, found his character gone and his calumniator triumphant.

Second Parenthesis denouncing judgment. Ver. 24.

24 Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have rejected the [1]law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

[1] Or, *teaching*

The doom prepared for these self-opinionated sinners is first expressed under the figure of the two materials which are destroyed most easily and quickly by fire. The rapid passage of the flame over a field of dry stubble, and the swift disappearance of the dry

grass when cast into the fire as fuel, alike describe a sudden and utter overthrow. In the second place the writer was thinking of a dead tree, the fruit of which, like the "apples of Sodom," or some English fungi, disappear, when struck, in a cloud of dry powder.

(7) On corrupt legislation. X. 1 and 2.

1 Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers 2 that write perverseness: to turn aside the needy from judgement, and to take away the right of the poor of my people, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!

The last denunciation (ver. 23) was directed against unjust sentences delivered by corrupt judges. Here the writer has in mind the framing of unjust laws and decrees in the interests of the powerful and to the detriment of the poor. Oppression was thus legalised, and the statute-book prostituted to the service of extortion and tyranny.

This brings to a close the series of prophecies dealing with the internal state of the kingdom of Judah, and it may be well at this point to summarise the accusations made by the prophet against his countrymen.

At the close of the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham, the Jews were in the full enjoyment of wealth and prosperity. But to the eye of the seer the condition of the kingdom was far from satisfactory. Though the temple services were conducted with regularity and the festivals duly observed, there lay beneath this outward form a depth of insincerity and iniquity. The prophet calls for reformation with its consequent restoration of political and judicial uprightness. For the State, when thus reformed, he forsees a splendid destiny as the religious teacher

and peacemaker of the world. But from this dream he is awakened to face the facts. Judah had been demoralised by prosperity and corrupted by foreign influences, while idolatry was everywhere prevalent.

The consequences of the military disaster of 735 B.C. were social and political disorganisation; the confusion was enhanced by the childish rule of King Ahaz. The women were characterised by vanity and an inordinate love of luxury. But from out of all the trials inflicted on the people, the prophet expected to see emerge a Remnant, reformed and purified, which should enjoy once more the presence of Jehovah.

The passage closes with a gloomy catalogue of sins prefaced by a song bewailing the failure of the Jews to respond to the care bestowed upon them. Land-grabbing, drunkenness, indulgence in sin, loss of moral discrimination, self-satisfied pride, judicial and legislative corruption—these are the justification for the penalty of captivity and destruction.

CHAPTER III

The Syro-Ephraimitish Invasion 735 B.C.

IT should distinctly be understood that, in spite of the crushing defeat inflicted on Judah by the combined forces of Israel and Syria, the designs which prompted the invasion completely miscarried. This is expressly stated in 2 Kings xvi. 5, "and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him." The intention of the two confederate kings, Pekah of Samaria and Rezin of Damascus, was to dethrone Ahaz in favour of the son of Tabeel, who of course would be a subservient creature of their own. In this way the important military resources of Judah would be at the disposal of the confederacy to use in checking the advance of Assyria. There is little doubt that it was the unwillingness of Jotham to join the league against Assyria as well as the youth and weakness of his successor Ahaz, which provoked the attack; while the failure of their plans had the natural effect of throwing Ahaz into a direct alliance with Assyria.

VII. 1—3. THE MEETING OF AHAZ AND ISAIAH.

1 And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it; but could 2 not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria [1]is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind.
3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and [2]Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field; 4 and say unto him, Take

1 Heb. *resteth on Ephraim*

2 That is *A remnant shall return*

While the approach of the invading armies was spreading consternation in Jerusalem, Isaiah, accompanied by his son, went to meet the young king with a message of encouragement. He found him personally inspecting some operations designed to provide the city with water during the coming siege and to cut off the supply from the besieging army. The upper pool of Gihon, now called the Birket Mamilla, was on the west side of the city. A conduit was constructed to lead the water within the city. The completion of the work is assigned to Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxii. 30), and the pool inside the city into which the waters flow is still called Hezekiah's pool. The meeting took place at the same place from which the Assyrian Rabshakeh thirty-four years later summoned the city to surrender to his master Sennacherib (xxxvi. 2). The reason for the presence of Isaiah's son, on which the narrative lays stress, is open to diversity of opinion. That there should be a witness of the interview was no doubt desirable; but many, having regard to the meaning of the name "Shear-jashub," "Remnant-shall-turn," prefer to suppose a symbolical purpose, depending on a previous interview between King and prophet of which there exists no record.

VII. 4—9. The Prophet's Message.

heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither let thine heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking fire-brands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Re-
5 maliah. Because Syria hath counselled evil against thee, Ephraim *also*, and the son of Re-
6 maliah, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set up a king in the midst of it, even the son of
7 Tabeel: thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it
8 come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin: and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken in pieces, that it be not a
9 people: and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

The king may take heart, for the dreaded invasion 4 is but the dying flicker of the tail-ends of torches on the point of extinction. The hostile enterprise of the kings of Syria and Ephraim is doomed to failure; 5-7 the throne of Ahaz is in no danger from the son of Tabeel. Verse 8 is contemptuous:—"the head of 8 Damascus is only Rezin"; but it seems impossible to explain why sixty-five years should be the exact period chosen within which the destruction of Ephraim was to take place. Samaria fell in 722 B.C., thirteen years after this interview. Again in verse 9 Ahaz is assured that the head of Samaria 9 was after all only Pekah, the rebel son of a mere captain in Pekahiah's army (2 Kings xv. 25). But Ahab was incredulous, and the prophet was constrained to remind him that the fulfilment of the reassuring prophecy would be annulled by unbelief.

VII. 10—16. THE SIGN TO AHAZ.

10 And the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, 11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; [1]ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. 12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. 13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, [2]a [3]virgin [4]shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name [5]Immanuel. 15 [6]Butter and honey shall be eat, [7]when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good. 16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken.

1 According to some ancient authorities, *make it deep unto Sheol.*
2 Or, *the*
3 Or, *maiden*
4 Or, *is with child and beareth*
5 That is *God is with us.*
6 Or, *Curds*
7 Or, *that he may know*

Ahaz continued obdurate in his attitude of in- 10-11 difference or scepticism, and Isaiah proceeded to offer him the confirmation of a "sign." But if the King placed no confidence in the prophet's predictions, he certainly wanted none of his signs; and he flatly told the prophet so: "I will not ask, neither 12 will I tempt the Lord!" And there is rising anger in Isaiah's answer, "Are you not satisfied with try- 13

ing the patience of a man (i.e., of Isaiah himself) that you must extend the same treatment to my God ? "

There exists some diversity of opinion with regard to the interpretation of the sign thus given to Ahaz by the Lord Himself. The Messianic interpretation, though the most important one, is, as it were, a secondary or spiritualised adaptation of an inspired utterance. But what was the direct historical significance of the sign ? What meaning did it bear for Ahaz himself, who, unbeliever as he was, could not be expected to possess any spiritual or prophetic insight ?

In the first place, it should be borne in mind that the sign was not a sign at all in the ordinary sense ; that is to say, it was not a miraculous occurrence designed to create confidence in the fulfilment of a prediction, such as was the sign granted to Hezekiah when he was sick (xxxviii. 7-8). For Ahaz had expressly refused to admit any such sign. Secondly, it is not probable that there is any reference at all to a miraculous Parthenogenesis, since the word translated "virgin" means simply a "young woman" not necessarily unmarried. Finally, a solution is rendered easier by noting the peculiar use by Isaiah of symbolical names given to children. They embodied for him in a visible, living form his great prophetic ideas ; serving not only to keep the teaching continually before the minds of men, but also as a proof that the prediction had been made, when the event turned out to be in fulfilment of it. Thus one of Isaiah's characteristic doctrines was, that however fierce the ordeal necessary to purge Judah of sin, yet a Remnant would survive to be once again the loyal people of God. Accordingly he provided a

living record of this teaching by naming his son "Shear-jashub"—"Remnant shall turn." Again, when he wished to impress on the people of Judah that swift destruction was impending on the kingdoms of Syria and Israel at the hands of the Assyrians, he called his new-born son "Maher-shalal-hash-baz"—"Haste-spoil-speed-booty"—thus fixing in human form the prophetic message that Israel would soon find their land spoiled and devastated by the enemy. As neither of these parallel cases imply any miracle, so there is no need to expect anything necessarily miraculous about the birth of the child Immanuel.

14 Isaiah's message to King Ahaz consists of three parts. Firstly, he wished to show that the true policy for Judah was one of quiet confidence in the protecting presence of Jehovah. This was effectively to be expressed by the name Immanuel, "God with us," given to the child of some woman. 16 Secondly, the Syro-Ephraimitish confederacy, which had been formed primarily for the purpose of resisting the Assyrians, and which was then trying by force of arms to compel Judah to join their league, would inevitably succumb to the power of the Assyrians, and would thus, without any effort on the part of Ahaz, cease to be any longer formidable. This view is expressed in verse 16, where the prophet foretells the desolation of Syria and Ephraim, before the child Immanuel should have reached the age for distinguishing good from evil. Thirdly, finding that 15 Ahaz was obstinately determined to adopt the unnecessary and perilous course of putting himself under the protection of Assyria, and in that way gratuitously giving Tiglath-Pileser an opportunity for still more extensive interference, the prophet was

obliged to describe the disastrous consequences in which that ill-starred alliance would involve the land of Judah. This is the meaning of verse 15, which foretells the conversion of the cultivated land into a desolate region supplying for food only the produce of herds and wild bees (chap. vii. 22). The exact age of a child intended by the phrase "when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good" is difficult to fix, especially as it is not certain whether the writer intends to express moral or only bodily good and evil. Perhaps the first dawn of moral consciousness begins at about three or four years old. Then, before three years had elapsed Syria and Ephraim would have been humbled by Assyria; and after that time Judah would feel the consequences of her dearly-bought deliverance.

VII. 17—25. The Consequences of the Assyrian Alliance.

17 The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; *even* the king of Assyria.

18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in 19 the land of Assyria. And they shall come and shall rest all of them in the [1]desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all [2]pastures.

20 In that day shall the LORD shave with a razor that is hired, *which is* in the parts beyond the River, *even* with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young 22 cow, and two sheep; and it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter; for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the midst of the land

23 And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, shall even be for briers and thorns.

24 With arrows and with bow shall one come thither; because all the land shall be briers and 25 thorns. And all the hills that were digged with the mattock, [3]thou shalt not come thither for fear of briers and thorns, but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of sheep.

1 Or, *rugged*

2 Or, *bushes*

3 Or, *where never came the fear of briers and thorns, shall be &c.* Or, *there shall not come thither the fear . . . but it shall be &c.*

Isaiah's policy was to avoid any connection at all with Assyria, warlike or peaceful. It was true that

both Jotham and Ahaz had refused to take part in the league of the Northern Kings, designed to check the aggression of King Pul. But the other policy adopted by Ahaz was nearly as dangerous. 18 For the result of invoking the friendly aid of Assyria to protect Judah against her enemies, would be to subject the land to occupation by foreign armies, which, even though nominally friendly, would only use it for their own ends; and thus friend and foe would combine to reduce it to desolation. The prophet is here speaking plainly to Ahaz. 17 No such disaster had ever befallen the Southern Kingdom since the day when the house of David lost its supremacy over the Northern tribes, so crushing as the advent of the Assyrian King was likely to prove. For 18 between the two leading States of antiquity, Assyria in the North and Egypt in the South, a fearful struggle was impending, and Judah, as the intervening State, was likely to be crushed between the combatants. The Assyrians would come like a swarm of bees, and the Egyptians like the flies which infested their River Nile (xviii. 1); and the 19 land of Judah would have to support their armies, and be devastated by their marauding soldiers. Indeed when Ahaz hired Assyrian aid from beyond the River Euphrates, to rid him of his enemies, he 20 was hiring a razor, sharp enough in all sooth, but one which would soon be used against himself to shave his land of its glory and its wealth. 21-22 Thus the prophecy about the childhood of Immanuel would be fulfilled when the land had passed out of cultivation and become only fit for grazing cattle; 23 when vineyards that formerly contained a thousand vines worth a silver shekel (2s. 6d.) each, were completely overgrown with briars and thorns; 24 when the hus-

25 bandman should give place to the hunter, and the once well-cultivated soil be too full of thorns and briars to be of use for anything save pasture land for oxen and sheep. Such was Isaiah's gloomy forecast which found its fulfilment in the years preceding the battle of Raphia in 720 B.C.; at the siege of Ashdod in 711 B.C., and finally during the great invasion of 701 B.C.

VIII. 1—4. THE OVERTHROW OF SYRIA AND EPHRAIM.

1 And the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great tablet, and write upon it [1]with the pen of a man, 2 [2]For Maher-shalal-hash-baz; and I will take unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of 3 Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD unto me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 4 For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria.

1 Or, *in common characters*
2 That is, *The spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth.*

Just as the prophet had wished to emphasise his message about the protecting presence of Jehovah by giving to a child a name meaning "God with us," so now he published abroad the prediction 1, 2 of the fall of the enemy, not only by displaying the words "Haste-spoil-speed-booty" on a large placard, 3 but also by giving the same significant phrase as a name to the son that his wife had just borne to him. Thus, if the child was born in 734 B.C., he would be two years old and just beginning to talk, when Damascus was captured by Pul (732 B.C.).

VIII. 5—8. THE PENALTY FOR THE ASSYRIAN ALLIANCE.

5 And the LORD spake unto me yet again, saying, 6 Forasmuch as this people hath refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly, [3]and rejoice [4]in Rezin and 7 Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the River, strong and many, *even* the king of Assyria and

3 Or, *even them that rejoice*
4 Or, *with*

all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all
8 his banks: and he shall sweep onward into Judah; he shall overflow and pass through: he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, [5]O Immanuel.

5 See ch. vii, 14.

One of the sources of the water supply for Jerusalem is called the Virgin's Spring, which lies on the eastern side of the city outside the wall. The water is conveyed by a remarkable tunnel, probably constructed in the time of Solomon, and is discharged into the Pool of Siloam, which was, in the time of Isaiah, just within the city wall. Thence a stream flowed with quiet current to water the neighbouring "King's Garden" (Nehem. iii. 15). This gentle stream was taken as a type of the attitude of quiet confidence in God and of peaceful neutrality which Isaiah felt was the right policy for Judah to pursue. But the Jews refused to be satisfied with these gently flowing waters of Siloam, and were so filled with* fear at the hostility of Rezin and Pekah that they invoked the aid of Assyria. Therefore, instead of "waters that go softly," there would come upon them the King of Assyria, like a mighty river overflowing its banks. It should be noticed that the torrent of invasion was not regarded as being directed primarily against Judah; but it was destined to involve that land in ruin, just as the waters of an overflowing river leave their proper channels and flood the surrounding districts. In the latter part of verse 8 the metaphor is changed. Assyria is regarded as a bird of prey hovering with outstretched wings over the whole breadth of the land; and the passage closes with a reference to the symbolic name Immanuel, with its

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* Adopting the emendation "faint before" in place of "rejoice in," as recommended in the Cambridge Bible.

suggestion of a people privileged, if they would only realise it, by the especial presence of Jehovah to protect and bless.

VIII. 9—17. THE TRUE POLICY FOR JUDAH.

9 [1]Make an uproar, O ye peoples, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in 10 pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for [2]God is with us. 11 For the LORD spake thus to me [3]with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, 12 Say ye not, A conspiracy, concerning all whereof this people shall say, A conspiracy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be in 13 dread *thereof*. The LORD of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be 14 your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants 15 of Jerusalem. And [4]many shall stumble thereon, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

16 Bind thou up the testi- 17 mony, seal the [5]law among my disciples. And I will wait for the LORD that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

1 Or, *Break* According to some ancient authorities, *Associate yourselves*
2 Heb. *immanu El*
3 Heb. *with strength of hand* See Ezek. iii. 14.
4 Or, *many among them shall stumble, and fall, &c.*
5 Or, *teaching*

9 There was no reason to dread the menaces of foreign powers, for their hostile coalitions, their preparations for war and their plans for coercing 10 Judah were all without avail against a people who were protected by the presence of Jehovah. The 11 true policy, for which the Divine sanction had been given with unmistakeable emphasis, condemned 12 alliances with foreign nations for protection, and the popular panic which led men to seek safety in that way. The alliance of Ahaz with Assyria, for example, was a slight on God's power or willingness 13 to protect His own people. If the Jews had a reverent awe for Jehovah and a dread of offending Him, they would have no cause to fear anything 14-15 else. But Isaiah was well aware that this counsel would not be accepted either by Judah or by Israel. Consequently Jehovah, who might have been a

refuge to them, would prove a stumbling-stone, or continual hindrance to the prosecution of their wayward designs, and finally the occasion of failure and disaster.

And now let the book be closed, and let those **16** who will hear the prophet's teaching regard this as his last word. Though the people of Judah have forfeited the favour of Jehovah, yet Isaiah himself 17 will continue to look for the manifestation of the Divine presence. Thus the prophet brings this portion of his work to an end with the realisation that Judah is irrevocably bent on following her own ways to the rejection of the counsel of Jehovah and to her own ultimate destruction.

CHAPTER IV

Prophecies addressed to the Northern Kingdom

UP to this point Isaiah has been addressing the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the tribe which possessed special privileges and special responsibilities as the realm of the House of David and the centre of all the religious associations connected with the temple. But Isaiah was not without sympathy for the other ten tribes, even though they had shown such cruelty to the Jews by invading their territory and enslaving their people. Accordingly he now addresses the Kingdom of Israel, which was already in the throes of disaster from the Assyrian invasion. For Tiglath-Pileser, strengthened by the submission of Ahaz, had swooped down on the Northern Confederacy, defeated Rezin, and overrun the territory of Israel. Both Damascus and Samaria were besieged, and the former was captured in 732 B.C. Samaria passed under the control of Assyria when Hoshea murdered Pekah and assumed the sovereignty as a vassal of Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xv. 30).

VIII. 18—22. THE MISERABLE PLIGHT OF ISRAEL.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and that mutter: should not a people seek

unto their God? on behalf of the living *should they* 20 *seek* unto the dead? To the [1]law and to the testimony! [2]if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning 21 for them. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and [3]curse by their king and by their God, and turn their faces 22 upward: and they shall look unto the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; [4]and [5]into thick darkness *they shall be* driven away.

1 Or, *teaching*
2 Or *surely according to this word shall they speak, for whom there is no morning*
3 Or, *curse their king and their God*
4 Or, *and thick darkness shall be driven away: for there, &c.* (Ch. viii. 23 in Heb.)
[5] Or, *in*

The dwelling-place of Jehovah was Mount *Z*ion in the tribe of Judah. Accordingly it was from *Z*ion that there came to Israel the teaching of God's prophet and of his sons whose names bore symbolical reference to the prophet's message (cp. viii. 3). 18

Isaiah sees in Israel a people who have forsaken their God, and who now in the extremity of their disaster are driven to seek for comfort from the predictions of witchcraft. It may be remembered that even Judah had not escaped the taint of foreign magic (ii. 6), and there can be no doubt that the more idolatrous people of Israel were also more addicted to witchcraft. But to Isaiah it seems extraordinary that the advice of the dead should be asked on behalf of the living in preference to seeking counsel of God. And when they do think to return and inquire of the law of God, it will then be too late; irrevocable doom will have overtaken them. 19 20 (margin)

Then there appear before the prophet's eyes the remnants of a defeated army, fleeing in dire extremity and hunger, and in their misery cursing their king Pekah for trying the hazard of battle with Assyria, cursing, too, their God to whose impotence or malevolence they attribute their disaster. And whether they turn beseeching eyes to heaven, or turn them down to the earth, they see nothing but the darkness of misery and despair. 21 (margin) 22

IX. 1—7. A Brighter Future in Store.

1 [1]But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond 2 Jordan, [2]Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the [3]shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, [4]thou hast increased their joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they 4 divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, thou hast broken as in the 5 day of Midian. For [5]all the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, 6 for fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called [6]Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, [7]Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgement and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.

1 Or, *For*
2 Or, *the district* (Ch. ix. 1 in Heb.)
3 Or, *deep darkness*
4 Another reading is, *thou didst not increase the joy*
5 Or, *every boot of the booted warrior*
6 Or, *Wonderful counsellor*
7 Heb. *Father of Eternity*

1 But in the future there was to be no such darkness as that which Israel had suffered from their enemies. It was but a light affliction that was endured by Zebulon and Naphtali when devastated by Tiglath-Pileser in 734 B.C. compared with the glory that was to be revealed in those same lands in the future. Darkness and Death would give place to a great 2 Light; and the nation would increase in numbers 3 and joyful prosperity. No longer would Israel 4 submit to slavery and oppression; they would be as free as in the days when Gideon delivered them in battle from the Midianites (Judges vii.) Every trace of war would be abolished, and the soldier's military boot and blood-stained garment would be 5 (margin) destroyed with fire. "For unto us"—and by "us" the prophet means his own tribe of Judah, destined once more to be the seat of Jehovah's

undivided Kingdom—"For unto us a Child is born!"

Now the prophecy uttered in verses 6 and 7 may have originated from the conception formed of the child Immanuel. But it must be remembered that Immanuel was an ordinary human child, while this child was to be something more than human; Immanuel was one of the ordinary people, while this was to be a Divine ruler. Yet Isaiah had in his mind no idea of a direct personal rule of Jehovah; rather he conceived of Divine energy operating through a human King so as to render him Divine. Accordingly he was to be marvellous in counsel, 6 godlike in strength, unceasing in fatherly care for his kingdom, and by his government bringing peace. Further, Isaiah does not seem to imply that this 7 King was to be free from death, but only that thenceforward good government and peace would never depart from the Kingdom. He has in view judgment and justice as permanent qualities in a dynasty springing from the House of David. So King might succeed King, but no king would ever ruin by unjust government or warlike ambition the prosperity secured by his predecessors.

The foregoing interpretation does not alter in the least the Messianic character of the prophecy. If Isaiah did not intend a meaning which could only be disclosed fully by the advent of the Messiah Himself, it does not therefore follow that that meaning does not exist. The message was in the first instance addressed to Israelites suffering the miseries of disorder and defeat, and it was adapted to meet their particular needs; but it received its truest and most spiritual fulfilment in the birth of Jesus the Messiah.

THE FIVE REFRAINS OF DOOM.

"For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

These five denunciations were directed against Israel at the time when they had failed in their design of bringing over Judah to join their confederacy. The Assyrian invasion was impending, but the people were still full of confidence.

(1) IX. 8—12.

8 The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath 9 lighted upon Israel. And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in pride and in 10 stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen, but we will build with hewn stone: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.

11 Therefore the LORD [1]shall set up on high against him the adversaries of Rezin, and [2]shall [3]stir up his 12 enemies: the Syrians [4]before, and the Philistines [5]behind: and they [6]shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

1 Or, *hath set* 2 Or, *hath stirred* 3 Or, *join together* Or, *arm* 4 Or, *on the east* 5 Or, *on the west* 6 Or, *have devoured*

8 God's message was sent to Israel as being His own people descended from the common ancestor Jacob as much as the tribe of Judah was. The charge brought against them here is of obstinate persistence in their plans in spite of failure. In 10 their pride they asserted that though their former scheme had miscarried, yet they had another and a better one to take its place. If an alliance against Assyria had been refused by Judah, yet other nations, such as the Philistines, were ready to join the cause of the Northern Confederacy. But the Israelites hardly realised the situation. In making an alliance with Rezin, who of course was glad enough to receive aid, the Kingdom of Israel was exposing 11 itself to the attack of Rezin's enemies; and in a struggle against Assyria Israel had little perhaps to gain, but certainly much to lose. Perhaps they would not have been so exultant had they realised

that the alliance was chiefly to the advantage of Syria, and that the resources of their country were being exploited for the benefit of Rezin. The same might be said of the Philistines who also felt themselves to be a mark for Assyrian vengeance ; so that between these two, Syria in front and Philistia behind—the terms " in front " and " behind " being used in respect of the direction from which the Assyrian attack was expected—the land of Israel ran grave risk of being devoured by its so-called allies who dragged it into sharing their dangers and disasters. Thus it will be noted that Israel is regarded as a secondary power. Syria is the centre of the struggle : " The Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him," *i.e.*, against Rezin ; while in the next verse Israel is represented as bearing the brunt of the consequences, as not unfrequently happens to the weaker member of a partnership.

12

11

(2) IX. 13—17.

13 Yet the people hath not turned unto him that smote them, neither have they sought the LORD of 14 hosts. Therefore the LORD [1]will cut off from Israel head and tail, palm-branch 15 and rush, in one day. The [2]ancient and the honourable man, he is the head ; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the 16 tail. For they that lead this people cause them to err ; and they that are led of them are [3]destroyed. 17 Therefore the Lord shall not rejoice over their young men, neither shall he have compassion on their fatherless and widows : for every one is profane and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

1 Or, *hath cut*

2 Or, *elder*

3 Heb. *swallowed up*

Infatuate obstinacy involves the people in utter disaster. Doubtless the army that Israel put into the field against Tiglath-Pileser contained the best and noblest in every walk of life ; as well as the meanest, which, in the eyes of God's prophet, were the lying prophets. The loss inflicted by defeat could not be estimated merely by the number of

killed. Judah had just before experienced in like manner the destruction of their ablest men (iii. 1-8), In comparing the two passages, there will be noticed a somewhat harsher and less sympathetic tone pervading this one relating to the Northern Kingdom. In verse 16 the prophet expresses his conviction that the policy of Israel had been a grave blunder, for which the leaders were responsible and for which the people had to suffer. Yet the moral depravity had been universal among the people, and the foolish arguments which prompted the war had been on every lip; and therefore no mercy could be shown to the stricken soldier nor to his wife and children whom his death would leave desolate.

14 and 15

16

17

(3) 18—21.

18 For wickedness burneth as the fire; it devoureth the briers and thorns: yea, it kindleth in the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in thick 19 clouds of smoke. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land [1]burnt up: the people also are as the fuel of fire; no man spareth his brother. 20 And one shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: 21 Manasseh, Ephraim: and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

[1] Or, *darkened*

In this section is described the devastation of the land by the Assyrians. A cloud of smoke rises from the land where the enemy are laying waste, and here and there breaks into flame as the fire catches the dry brushwood. To the prophet the fire seems symbolical of the wickedness of the people, while the overhanging pall of smoke reminds him of the threatening vengeance of Jehovah. Want and misery breed a reckless selfishness; the starving fugitive forgets everything save his own gnawing hunger, and to satisfy that will not scruple to rob or destroy his own brother. He is even driven to devour his own flesh. All sense of the claims of

18

19 (margin)

20

21

national unity is lost save only when men unite in a common hatred for the Jew, whose traitorous refusal to join the league seems a principal cause of the disaster.

(4) X. 3 and 4.

1 or, Without me they shall bow down &c.

3 And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave 4 your glory? [1]They shall only bow down under the prisoners, and shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

This passage does not appear to be as complete as the preceding ones. That the first two verses of Chapter x. do not belong to it is probable for the following reasons: (1) the use of the expression "Woe unto them" points to a connection with Chapter v., in which the same expression is repeated six times; (2) the three preceding sections ending in the same refrain portray consistently the successive stages of a disaster, and so the mention of a definite sin though exactly corresponding with the style and subject matter of Chapter v. breaks the continuity here; (3) the phrase "My people" generally refers to Judah as being Isaiah's own people and hardly is used of Israel.

The prophet pictures the helplessness of the Israelites in their distress. They had forsaken God, and in the day of calamity could find no refuge except by crouching down among the captives or crawling for concealment under the dead bodies on the field of battle.

(5) V. 25.

25 Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them, and the hills did tremble, and their carcases were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

This passage also seems incomplete. According to the system so far followed by the writer of representing successive stages in the invasion, it might be expected that this section would refer to the siege of Samaria. This may very well be the case. The words "He hath stretched forth his hand against them and hath smitten them" suggest plague as being always regarded as a direct visitation from God, and also as being a most likely occurrence during a siege. The trembling of the hills may denote an earthquake; while the mention of dead bodies lying unburied in the street to be torn by scavenger dogs, vividly suggests the terrible exigencies of both siege and pestilence.

It will be remembered that on this occasion Samaria, though besieged, was not actually taken. Tigleth-Pileser rested satisfied with the revolution which deposed Pekah in favour of Hoshea. He had however captured Damascus; and in that city he held a great court which Ahaz was obliged submissively to attend. It is true that the King of Judah had seen the humiliation of his Israelitish and Syrian persecutors, but his revenge had been bought at the price of much treasure and of his political and religious independence (2 Kings xvi. 7 ff.).

The Assyrian Army.

V. 26—30.

26 And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss for [1]them from the end of the earth: and, behold, [2]they shall come with speed swiftly: 27 none shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: 28 whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: 29 their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver. 30 And they shall roar [3]against them in that day like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, [4]behold darkness *and* distress, and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof.

1 Heb. *him*
2 Heb. *he*, and in the following verses
3 Or, *over*
4 According to the Massoretic text, *behold darkness; distress and light; it is dark &c.*

It was not often that the Assyrians suffered reverse. The continual warfare in which they were engaged raised the efficiency of their army to a level only attained by professional soldiers. As the armies which they had to encounter were mostly national levies drawn for the occasion from among the peaceful cultivators of the soil, though generally stiffened by the professional nucleus of the King's body-guard, it was not surprising that victory more often rested with the well-trained Assyrian veterans. Their discipline and efficiency are vividly described in this passage, which also incidentally reveals the defects which contributed to the failure of their enemies.

Allusion is first made to the rapidity of march by 26 which the Assyrians paralysed the sluggish and unwieldly armies of their opponents, who had no time to mature their plans before the invader was upon them. This speed of movement is referred to in X. 28 ff. Secondly, the soldiers are thoroughly 27 hardened and used to exertion. None drop out of the ranks through exhaustion or lameness; no sentinel ever yields to sleep at his post. Thirdly, their arms and accoutrements are in perfect order. No slovenliness is to be seen in their dress; their belts are tight and their shoes fastened. Bows and 28 arrows are ready for service, the horses' hoofs are as sound and hard as flint stones, and the chariots dash along like a whirlwind. Finally, there is their 29 terrible battle cry comparable to the roaring of lions or of the sea. No wonder such an army plundered at its will without hindrance, spreading darkness 30 and sorrow wherever it went.

CHAPTER V

The Invasion of Moab, Syria and Israel, 734 B.C

TIGLATH-PILESER, when subduing Syria and Israel, crossed the Jordan and reduced the Ammonites and Moabites to submission. He then overcame the Philistines, and after that the Edomites and Arabs. These operations occupied the interval between the invasion of 734 B.C. and the ultimate fall of Damascus in 732 B.C. Chapters xv. and xvi. 1-12 may be referred to this conquest and devastation of Moab. The last two verses of Chapter xvi. are to be assigned on their own evidence to a later date, possibly a few years before Sargon's campaign in 711 B.C. Of course there is practically no evidence to prove that these chapters were composed with the Assyrian invasion in view; and if, as many commentators hold, they were originally quite distinct in date and authorship from the surrounding prophecies, it is impossible to guess what incident in border warfare first gave rise to them. It is certainly true that the style of this prophecy on Moab differs from that of the rest of Isaiah's writings; but, on the other hand, it appears that the invaders came from the North, as the Assyrians did, and the fact that their name is not mentioned may be taken as evidence that, like the Assyrians,

they were sufficiently notorious to require no definition. A solution of the difficulty, however, is suggested by a comparison of Chapter xvi. with Jeremiah xlviii. where the same passage occurs with very little alteration. It may reasonably be supposed that both Isaiah and Jeremiah borrowed from an earlier composition, each adapting what he took to his own particular purpose. Thus Isaiah may be regarded as applying to the Assyrian invasion of 734 B.C. parts of an ancient poem originally composed on another occasion. If this be so, it explains the dissimilarity noticed between the style of Chapters xv. and xvi. and that usually adopted by Isaiah, as well as the absence of any direct historical allusion.

XV. 1—4. The Disaster.

1 The [1]burden of Moab.
For [2]in a night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to nought; for [2]in a night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to
2 nought. [3]He is gone up to [4]Bayith, and to Dibon, to the high places to weep: Moab howleth [5]over Nebo, and [5]over Medeba: on all their heads is baldness, every beard is cut off.
3 In their streets they gird themselves with sackcloth: on their housetops, and in their broad places, every one howleth, weeping
4 abundantly. And Heshbon crieth out, and Elealeh; their voice is heard even unto Jahaz: therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; his soul trembleth within him.

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*
[2] Or, *in the night*
[3] Or, *Bayith and Dibon are gone up to the high places*
[4] Or, *the temple*
[5] Or, *upon*

The two chief cities of Moab, Ar of Moab and Kir of Moab (the Kir-hareseth of 2 Kings iii. 25) had been reduced by a night attack, and the whole country was plunged into grief. The inhabitants of Bayith, the position of which is unknown; and of Dibon, a few miles North of the Arnon and famous for the discovery of the Moabite stone, had taken refuge on the heights overlooking the Jordan valley. Of these the two principal ones are mentioned: Nebo, famous as the point from which Moses surveyed the promised land (Deut. xxxiv. 1), and

1

2 (margin)

Medeba, a little to the south of Nebo (Num. xxi. 30). These high places may very well have been sanctuaries to which the distressed Moabites would naturally withdraw. The cities also were filled with all the signs of mourning. The sounds of lamentation reached to Jahaz, just South of the Arnon, the site of the Israelite victory over Sihon, King of the Amorites, coming from Heshbon and Elealeh at the Northern extremity of the Dead Sea. The garrisons of the towns trembled for their own fate on hearing of the disaster to Ar and Kir.

3

4

XV. 5—9. The Fugitives.

5 My heart crieth out for Moab; her [1]nobles *flee* unto Zoar, [2]to Eglath-shelishiyah: for by the ascent of Luhith with weeping they go up; for in the way of Horonaim they raise up a cry of 6 destruction. For the waters of Nimrim shall be [3]desolate: for the grass is withered away, the tender grass faileth, there is no 7 green thing. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away [4]to the 8 brook of the willows. For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-9 elim. For the waters of Dimon are full of blood: for I will bring yet more upon Dimon, a lion upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.

1 Or, as otherwise read, *fugitives*
2 Or, *as an heifer of three years old*
3 Heb. *desolations.*
4 Or. *over*

The direction of the flight was towards the South. The distress of the Moabites as they made their way towards Zoar (the modern Dra'a) at the S.E. corner of the Dead Sea, was enhanced by a drought which dried up the stream of Nimrim, and withered the green herbage. The name Nimrim is still preserved in the ruins of Nemeireh on the S.E. shore of the Dead Sea. Both Horonaim and the ascent of Luhith were passes leading up from the Northern end of the Dead Sea to the high ground about Heshbon. From the drought at Nimrim the fugitives were constrained to gather together their possessions, the goods they had succeeded in saving, and to carry them to a further stream, probably that

in the valley of Zered (Num. xxi. 12), which is the boundary between Moab and Edom. Thus they were compelled to leave their own land, which could no longer give security. For the desolation of Moab had extended from one end of the land to the other, and those who remained in it fell victims to the lion-like conquerors who stained the water of the brooks with their blood. 8, 9

XVI. 1—6. THE APPEAL TO JUDAH.

1 [1]Send ye the lambs for the ruler of the land from [2]Sela [3]*which is* toward the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of 2 Zion. For it shall be that, as wandering birds, as a scattered nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be at 3 the fords of Arnon. Give counsel, execute judgement; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday: hide the outcasts; bewray not the 4 wanderer. [4]Let mine outcasts dwell with thee; as for Moab, be thou a covert to him from the face of the spoiler: for [5]the extortioner is brought to nought, spoiling ceaseth, [6]the oppressors are consumed out 5 of the land. And a throne shall be established in mercy, and one shall sit thereon in truth, in the tent of David; judging, and seeking judgement, and swift to do righteousness.

6 We have heard of the pride of Moab, *that* he is very proud; even of his arrogancy, and his pride, and his wrath; his boastings are nought.

1 See 2 Kings iii. 4
2 Or, *Petra*
3 Or, *to*
4 According to many ancient versions, *Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee; be thou &c.*
5 Or, *extortion*
6 Heb. *the treaders down*

The Moabite fugitives cast about for a friendly power with which they may take refuge. They decide to apply to Judah, and with that end in view propose to renew the annual tribute of lambs which had been paid to Ahab but discontinued at his death (2 Kings iii. 4 and 5). In this way they will escape the fate of homeless exiles with no place in which to take refuge. Some difficulty is occasioned by Judah being designated "ruler of the land from Sela toward the wilderness." Sela is perhaps the later Petra; it was the scene of Amaziah's victory over the Edomites (2 Kings xiv. 7). The ascendency of Judah over Edom was lost during the troublous times at the beginning of the reign of Ahaz; but it may well be questioned whether the claim to nominal sovereignty was ever abandoned, especially 1 2 1

when the fortunes of Judah had been to some extent restored through the alliance made by Ahaz with the Assyrians. It would be thoroughly in keeping with the cringing attitude of the Moabites to try and flatter the pride of the Jews by acknowledging that sovereignty, even though it was more nominal than real.

3, 4 Verses 3-5 give the substance of the appeal made by the Moabites to the court of Judah. The Jews are urged to hold a consultation and to pay careful attention to this request for protection. The Moabites hope to find in Judah such a refuge from oppression as is a deep shadow from the heat of the noonday sun. In the latter part of verse 4 better sense is obtained by supplying the word "until" in place of "for." Thus the Moabites are represented as pleading that they will only need to be harboured by Judah until the invader shall have departed from their land. The petition closes with a crafty attempt

5 to play upon the national pride and political aspirations of the Jews.

6 But the appeal was rejected. The Jewish politicians had no difficulty in seeing through the cunning devices of the Moabites. They remembered the former hostile attitude of Moab, and were convinced that this hypocritical assumption of friendliness and humility was only due to a desire to escape from their present difficulties.

XVI. 7—12. Lamentation for the Fate of Moab.

7 Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the [1]raisin-cakes of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn, utterly stricken. 8 For the fields of Heshbon languish, *and* the vine of Sibmah; [2]the lords of the nations have broken down the choice plants thereof; they reached even unto Jazer, they wandered into the wilderness; her branches were spread abroad, they passed over the sea. 9 Therefore I will

1 Or, *foundations*
2 Or, *her choice plants did break down the lords of nations*

weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for upon thy summer fruits and upon thy harvest the *battle* 10 shout is fallen. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the fruitful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither joyful noise: no treader shall tread out wine in the presses; I have made the *vintage* 11 shout to cease. Wherefore my bowels sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-heres. 12 And it shall come to pass, when Moab presenteth himself, when he wearieth himself upon the high place, and shall come to his sanctuary to pray, that he shall not prevail.

The writer regrets the devastation of the wine-growing districts of Moab. Evidently the grapes of Sibmah, near Heshbon, produced a wine which was prized at the tables of princes, for this is the meaning of the preferable reading "her choice plants did break down (*i.e.*, intoxicate) the lords of nations." The boundaries of this wine-producing district are given as Jazer in the North, the wilderness on the East and the Dead Sea on the West. In verse 9 the writer expresses his sympathy for the weeping of the vintners of Jazer over the loss of their Sibmah vines. The devastation of war had ruined the harvest, the fields were deserted, and the cheerful sounds of the vintage were silent. The doom of Moab was the more pitiable, in that no prayers offered to their gods upon the sacred high places could avail to save them.

7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

XVI. 13, 14. A Later Disaster Predicted.

13 This is the word that the LORD spake concerning 14 Moab in time past. But now the LORD hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt, with all his great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and of no account.

If it is correct to assign the preceding passages on Moab to the invasion of 734 B.C. then verses 13 and 14 will probably refer to Sargon's invasion in 711 B.C. Moab did take part in the revolt of which Ashdod was the centre, and which collapsed when

14 Sargon took that city. A hireling serves for exactly the stipulated time and no more. The period of three years will on no account be extended (chap. xxi. 16).

XVII. 1—3. The Overthrow of Syria and Israel.

1 The [1] burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a 2 ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken: they shall be for flocks which shall lie down, and none 3 shall make them afraid. The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom [2] from Damascus and the remnant of Syria; they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*

[2] Or, *from Damascus; and the remnant of Syria shall &c.*

1, 2 Damascus was captured by Tiglath Pileser in 732 B.C. All the country had been overrun by the Assyrian armies, and now, desolate and uncultivated, it only afforded pasturage for flocks. Aroer is on the East of Jordan, not the place on the Arnon but further North in the territory allotted to the tribe of Gad. The fortresses which had been built 3 to defend the land of Israel were destroyed, and Syria had lost the sovereignty which had rendered her the leading state in the confederacy against Assyria. Ephraim and Syria were reduced to a dead level of insignificance by their common disaster.

XVII. 4—8. The Survival of a Remnant.

4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his 5 flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the standing corn, and his arm reapeth the ears; yea it shall be as when one gleaneth ears in the valley of 6 Rephaim. Yet there shall be left therein gleanings, as the [1] shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree, saith the LORD, the God of Israel. 7 In that day shall a man look unto his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. 8 And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall he have respect to that which his fingers have made, either the [2] Asherim, or the sun-images.

[1] Heb. *beating*

4 The loss of strength inflicted on Israel by the Assyrian invasion was like the wasting of a sick man; 5 like the reaping of the corn when the harvestman gathered the ears together in armfuls to cut with the sickle, and when the poor man followed in his wake gleaning the corn in the valley of Rephaim that lies to the South of Jerusalem; like the gathering of olive berries when the olive tree is shaken to divest it of its fruit. 6 Yet just as the Law required that gleanings should be left on the olive tree for the poor (Deut. xxiv. 20), so also a remnant should be left to Israel. The idea of a remnant purified by suffering and henceforward proving faithful to Jehovah is familiar elsewhere as applied to Judah; here Isaiah extends the doctrine to include Israel, and forsees that the survivors of the punishment will forsake their idolatrous reverence for the Asherim, or sacred wooden posts erected near the altars, and for the images of the sun-deity.

XVII. 9—11. Desolation.

9 In that day shall his strong cities be as the forsaken places [1]in the wood and on the mountain top, which were forsaken from before the children of Israel: and it shall be a 10 desolation. For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy [2]strength; therefore thou plantest [3]pleasant plants, and settest it with 11 [4]strange slips; in the day of thy planting thou hedgest it in, and in the morning thou makest thy seed to blossom: but the harvest [5]fleeth away in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

1 The Sept. reads, *of the Amorites and the Hivites*

2 Or, *strong hold*

3 Or, *plantings of Adonis*

4 Or, *vine slips of a strange god*

5 Or, *shall be a heap*

9 When Israel first entered Canaan they expelled the original inhabitants, and soon became familiar with the site of ruined cities deserted by their former Amorite or Hivite occupants. This was now the case with the cities of the Israelites themselves. 10 As a punishment for their desertion of Jehovah, they were doomed to see their enterprises utterly fail at last, however prosperous they might have seemed

for a time. This idea is expressed under the figure of a heathen symbolical rite performed in honour of the Syrian god Adonis. At a certain time of the year baskets of earth were planted with grain which, under the influence of warmth and moisture, rapidly sprouted and covered the baskets with luxuriant green. But in a short time all this was allowed to wither and become a heap of dead grass. This is probably the reference in the phrase "pleasant plants," while "strange slips" similarly mean cuttings of plants grown in honour of the foreign god Adonis whose worship had spread from Syria 11 into the land of Israel. Thus to Isaiah the luxuriant vegetation of these "gardens of Adonis" suggested the sanguine schemes of the Israelites which, like the grass, had been doomed to sudden and irreparable disaster.

CHAPTER VI

Prophecies relating to the period between the death of Ahaz and the battle of Raphia. B.C. 727-720

AHAZ, King of Judah and Tiglath Pileser III., King of Assyria, died about the same time, B.C. 727. The former was succeeded by Hezekiah, the latter by Shalmaneser IV.

It has already been mentioned that Hoshea usurped the throne of Israel, and with the approval of Assyria reigned at Samaria in place of Pekah. Soon after, however, both in 725 B.C. and again in 724 B.C., Hoshea attempted to shake off the Assyrian yoke. Palestine was invaded and Samaria besieged, and though Shalmaneser died during the course of the siege, the city was finally taken by his successor Sargon in B.C. 722. A wholesale deportation of the Israelite inhabitants reduced the land to political insignificance (2 Kings xvii.).

Meanwhile the inevitable conflict between Egypt and Assyria was drawing near. Two years after the fall of Samaria, renewed treason among the cities of Palestine brought back the army of Sargon. As usual the rebellion had been encouraged by Egypt and Philistia, and Sargon encountered the combined armies of these powers at Raphia in 720 B.C. The Egyptians were led by So, an Ethiopian prince who

had established a new dynasty in Egypt five years before. The result of the battle was not doubtful; the Egyptians and their allies suffered a complete defeat. The Assyrian king, however, did not venture to invade Egypt.

XIV. 28—32. THE DEATH OF TIGLATH PILESER III.

28 In the year that King Ahaz died was this [1]burden. 29 Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a [2]basilisk, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying 30 serpent. And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and thy remnant shall be 31 slain. Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou art melted away, O Philistia, all of thee; for there cometh a smoke out of the north and [3]none standeth aloof at his appointed times. 32 What then shall one answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge

[1] Or, *oracle*
[2] Or, *adder*
[3] Or, *there is no straggler in his ranks*

The death of an Assyrian king generally gave a fresh impetus to schemes of revolt. Who knew but that 29 the new king might prove weak and unwarlike! On this occasion the whole of Philistia was filled with sanguine anticipations at the death of the dreaded Tiglath Pileser III. in B.C. 727. They probably sent ambassadors to Samaria and encouraged Hoshea in his intention to rebel; from the passage before us it is clear that they wished to involve Judah in their schemes for shaking off the Assyrian yoke. They were reminded, however, by Isaiah, that the new king was likely to prove even more terrible than his predecessor. It was of no use for them to try and 30 involve Judah in a conspiracy. The policy of Judah was to provide maintenance and security for the poor of the land; the Philistines, if they wished, might court the horrors of famine and slaughter which were the consequences of war with Assyria. 31 The prophet could see in imagination the approach of an Assyrian army. Heralded by the smoke of

burning villages, the host advanced with all that perfection of discipline and order for which the Assyrian armies were famous. What, then, was to be the answer to the Philistine ambassadors who were asking Judah to join in a league to revolt from Assyria? Simply that the people would remain quiet, trusting to the protection of Jehovah. And so it came to pass that Judah enjoyed tranquillity while Shalmaneser and Sargon were inflicting untold sufferings on the rebellious Israelites in the campaigns of 725-2 B.C.

32

XXVIII. 1—4. THE DOWNFALL OF SAMARIA.

1 Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are [1] overcome 2 with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing, shall he cast down to the earth 3 [2] with the hand. The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under-4 foot; and the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the first ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

1 Heb. *smitten down.*

2 Or, *with violence*

Samaria, lying at the head of a rich valley, is like the wreath of flowers on the head of a drunkard. But the flowers are fading, and the fair city of Samaria likewise is hastening towards her final overthrow. There is no sign that the prophecy was written after the capture of Samaria (B.C. 722); and though the allusion to the drunken habits of the Ephraimites does not seem to suit the near proximity of the final catastrophe, yet it is evident that Samaria was already in very serious danger. Accordingly the prophecy may be dated at the time when the Assyrian armies were already closing on the doomed city, but before her misfortunes had wiped out the memory of her sins.

2 The "strong and mighty one" is Shalmaneser IV., leading his Assyrian armies and devastating the land as a storm of hail levels the crops or as an over-
3 flowing river works havoc around. In just such a way shall destruction fall upon Samaria, the crown-
4 ing glory of the land, as the garland is of the feaster! Beautiful as that hill must have been with its view along the fertile valley below, yet ruin will come to it as swiftly as to the withering flower, or to the first ripe fig, the delicacy of which ensures its being eagerly consumed.

XXVIII. 5—6. THE GLORY OF JUDAH.

5 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of
6 his people; and for a spirit of judgement to him that sitteth in judgement, and for strength to them that turn back the battle [1] at the gate.

[1] Or, *to*

In the preceding passage Samaria was regarded as Ephraim's crown of pride. In this passage the prophet points to the Lord of hosts as the crown not of pride but of glory; as a beautiful circlet adorning the head of His people of Judah who remain when
6 Ephraim has been swept away. The beauty of this coronet consists not in a city's picturesque situation, but in the probity of the judges and the valour of the soldiers who drive away the invader from the frontier.

XXVIII. 7, 8. DRUNKENNESS IN JUDAH.

7 But these also [1] have erred through wine, and through strong drink [2] are gone astray; the priest and the prophet [1] have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are gone astray through strong drink; they [1] err in vision, they stumble in judgement.
8 For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, *so that there is* no place *clean*.

[1] Or, *reel*
[2] Or, *stagger*

But the ideal of verses 5 and 6 was as yet far from being realised. The vice of drunkenness was prevalent in Judah as well as in Ephraim, and chief among the culprits were the leaders of religion, the

priest and the prophet, whose inspired faculties were destroyed by sinful indulgence. Isaiah had doubtless witnessed their orgies, disgraced as they were by the revolting consequences of drunken excess.

XXVIII. 9—13. Impatience under Reproof.

9 [1]Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the [2]message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the 10 breasts? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; [3]line upon line, line upon line; here a 11 little, there a little. [4]Nay, but by *men of* strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people: to 12 whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary: and this is the refreshing: yet they 13 would not hear. Therefore shall the word of the Lord be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little: that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

1 Or, *Whom shall he teach ... and whom shall he make ... breasts. For, &c.*
2 Or, *report*
3 Or, *rule*
4 Or, *For with stammering lips*

But the Jews felt such reproof to be tantamount to insult. Were they children, they indignantly asked, that they should be exposed to such everlasting schooling? The prophet was felt to be a troublesome bore with his persistent warnings "in season and out of season." 10

The prophet's answer is given in verses 11-13. If his warnings were rejected as unpalatable, the same lesson would be taught by a foreign invader speaking in a language which the Jews could not understand. As an example of such stern discipline, Isaiah pointed to the fate of Samaria which must at that time have been vividly present in the minds of all. There were people who had refused to listen to the prophet when he urged upon them the necessity of "rest," that is, of keeping peace by abstaining from rebellion against Assyria; the consequence was that the same lesson which they had despised before at the mouth of the prophet was afterwards taught 11 12 13

them with an equally troublesome persistence by the grim Assyrian invader.

XXVIII. 14—17. False Security.

14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem: 15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with [1] hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: 16 therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I [2] lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone* of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. 17 And I will make judgement the line, and righteousness the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

1 Heb. *Sheol.*

2 Or, *have laid*

14 With such a warning before them, it behoved the rulers of Jerusalem to beware how they scornfully refused to hear the prophet's message. Of course 15 the Jewish politicians believed that by their crafty policy they had secured themselves against invasion; that by professions of submission and friendship they had persuaded the Assyrian monarch not to include Judah in the punishment he was inflicting on Israel. But Isaiah clearly implies that such submission to Assyria was false, and that the real sympathies of Judah were ranged on the side of the rebels. Thus the Jews based their hopes of security on their ability to deceive the enemy with hypo-16 critical protestations of fidelity. But *Zion* needed greater security than was afforded by such a foundation of lies. To him who recognised this truth, there would be no necessity for hurried and anxious 17 contrivings. God would have His people follow a policy founded on truth and built upright with the plumb-line of judgment and righteousness; for as storms sweep away all crooked buildings, so their policy of falsehood, when put to the test, was doomed to failure.

XXVIII. 18—22. A Futile Device.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with [1] hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden 19 down by it. As often as it passeth through it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass through, by day and by night; and it shall be nought but terror to under-20 stand the [2] message. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself 21 in it. For the Lord shall rise up as in [1] mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his 22 strange act. Now therefore be ye not scorners, lest your bands be made strong: for a consummation, and that determined, have I heard from the Lord, the Lord of hosts, upon the whole [2] earth.

1 Heb. *Sheol*

2 Or, *report*

1 See 1 Chr. xiv. 11 &c.

2 Or, *land*

The device by which the Jews hoped to escape disaster would be found as ineffective as it was deceitful. Not once, among all the times that danger threatened, would their miserable contrivance avail to shield them. The scourge would strike home every time it was lifted; every day that the river overflowed, the flood would rush over them, so that even the report of the trouble would bring distress and terror to their hearts. For indeed those diplomatic evasions and concealments would not deceive the Assyrian; they were too meagre and transparent to afford any covering or protection to the foolish people who trusted to find security in them. The only true safety for the Jews lay in trusting to Jehovah to fight for them as He had done in the days of old, when David won the two-fold victory over the Philistines (1 Chron. xiv. 11-16). Let not therefore the Jews despise the message from the Lord's prophet, lest they fall captives to the enemy! For God was about to execute a terrible act of exterminating vengeance upon the nations of the earth. The instrument for inflicting the vengeance was, of course, the King of Assyria.

XXVIII. 23—29. The Ways of Providence.

23 Give ye ear, and hear 24 my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow continually to sow? Doth he *continually* open and break the clods of his ground? 25 When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the [1] fitches and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows and the barley in the appointed place and the spelt in the border thereof? 26 [2] For his God doth instruct him aright, *and* doth teach 27 him. For the fitches are not threshed with a sharp *threshing* instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. 28 [3] Bread *corn* is ground; for he will not ever be threshing it; and though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he doth not 29 grind it. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in [4] wisdom.

1 Or, *black cummin (Nigella sativa)*
2 Or, *And he traineth each of them aright; his God doth teach him*
3 Or, *Is bread corn crushed? Nay, he will not ever be threshing it, and driving his cart wheels and his horses over it: he doth not crush it.*
4 Or, *effectual working*

In this passage two important difficulties are answered. Firstly, why did God allow His chosen people to be afflicted at all? and, secondly, if He inflicted such terrific punishment on Samaria, what reason was there for hoping that a lighter treatment would be meted out to Judah?

The answers to these questions are given by means 24 of a parable taken from the practices of agriculture. Affliction was as necessary to prepare the nation for its high destiny as ploughing and breaking the clods of earth were needful before seed could be sown. But ploughing, though a preparation equally 25 necessary for all, was not always being carried on; and when the time for sowing arrived, already a difference in the treatment and position of the various kinds of seed could be discerned. And if 26 God teaches the farmer to distinguish between seeds should He not Himself also vary His treatment of 27 His people to suit their needs? Again, when the harvest comes, an equally remarkable difference can be noted in the processes to which the grains are severally subjected. Small grain like cummin must be threshed lightly with a stick, since it would be bruised and spoiled by the sharp or heavy imple-

ments necessary for coarser kinds. For the purpose of threshing is to clean and not to crush. 28 The lesson to be drawn from this parable was that the wonderful adaptation of means to an end, so 29 conspicuous in the ways of the farmer, proceeded from the same Divine Wisdom which ordered the discipline of His people, inflicting heavy distress upon the hard and impenitent kingdom of Israel, while a milder treatment was reserved for Judah, where, in spite of all its faults, there still did linger a real spark of loyalty to Jehovah.

CHAPTER VII

Prophecies relating to the Period of the Philistine Revolt 712—710 B.C

DURING the siege of Samaria, when Sargon was busy in Palestine, a Chaldean usurper named Merodach-Baladan succeeded in seizing Babylon and making himself King there. For some time he was able to maintain his position in defiance of Assyria, and apparently about the year 712 B.C. he sent ambassadors to the court of Hezekiah, King of Judah, with a view to strengthening his position by means of an alliance. He was aware that rebellion was rife in the South of Palestine, and he hoped to divert the attention of the Assyrian monarch from himself by fomenting insurrections elsewhere. In 711 B.C. Sargon invaded Palestine. His arms were chiefly directed against the Philistine city of Ashdod; and when the Egyptians proved faithless to their engagements to send assistance, the rebellion collapsed and Ashdod was captured. In the following year Sargon was free to attack Merodach-Baladan, who forthwith retired, and left Babylon to be entered in triumph by the Assyrian conqueror. In 709 B.C. Merodach-Baladan was captured, and, with the exception perhaps of a few months in 703 B.C. when he once

again established his ascendency in Babylon until defeated by Sennacherib, he spent the rest of his life in exile.

XXXVIII. 1—8. Hezekiah's Sickness.

[1] See 2 Kings xx. 1, &c

1 [1]In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not 2 live. Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the 3 LORD, and said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And 4 Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, 5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy 6 days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I 7 will defend this city. And this shall be the sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken: 8 behold, I will cause the shadow on the steps, which is gone down on the [2]dial of Ahaz [3]with the sun, to return backward ten steps. So the sun returned ten steps [4]on the dial whereon it was gone down.

[2] Heb. *steps.* [3] Or *by* [4] Or, *by which steps it &c.*

Hezekiah came to the throne in 727 B.C. His reign was remarkable for a great religious revival, and the restoration of the Temple and its services which had been neglected during the preceding reigns. The illness mentioned in this chapter was in 712 B.C., fifteen years before his death in 697 B.C. These, at any rate, are the most probable dates for the reign, though another chronological system makes Hezekiah reign from 715 to 686 B.C.; in which case his illness must have taken place just about the time of Sennacherib's great invasion. But the Biblical narrative gives no hint of such coincidence. Further, the embassy of Merodach-Baladan, which took place after Hezekiah's illness, may be referred with greater probability to the latter part of Baladan's long reign (722—710 B.C.) than to his short six month's usurpation in 703 B.C. Accordingly the incident mentioned in the section before us, most probably took place at a date not

far from the year 712 B.C. In verse 3 there is a reference to Hezekiah's zeal in restoring the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah evidently enjoyed a privileged position at court, and his message was received with respect. The reference in verse 6 to the King of Assyria is no evidence in favour of assigning Hezekiah's illness to the time of Sennacherib's invasion, since the Assyrian danger was always more or less threatening during the latter part of the eighth century. Nothing is known of the "steps" of Ahaz.

XXXVIII. 9—20. THE PSALM OF HEZEKIAH.

9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.

10 I said, In the [1]noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of [2]the grave:
I am deprived of the residue of my years.

11 I said, I shall not see [3]the LORD, *even* [3]the LORD in the land of the living:
I shall behold man no more [4]with the inhabitants of the world.

12 Mine [5]age is removed, and is carried away from me as a shepherd's tent:
I have rolled up like a weaver my life; he will cut me off from the [6]loom:
From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

13 [7]I quieted *myself* until morning; as a lion, so he breaketh all my bones:
From day even till night wilt thou make an end of me.

14 Like a swallow *or* a crane, so did I chatter;
I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail *with looking* upward;
O LORD, I am oppressed, be thou my surety.

15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it:
I shall go [8]softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.

16 O Lord, by these things men live,
And wholly therein is the life of my spirit:
[9]Wherefore recover thou me, and make me to live.

17 Behold, *it was* for *my* peace *that* I had great bitterness:
But [10]thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of [11]corruption:
For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

18 For [2]the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee:
They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day:
The father to the children shall make known thy truth.

20 The LORD is *ready* to save me:
Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments
All the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

1 Or, *tranquillity*
2 Heb. *Sheol.*
3 Heb. *Jah.*
4 Or, *when I am among them that have ceased to be*
5 Or, *habitation*
6 Heb. *thrum.*
7 Or, *I thought until morning. As a lion, so will he break &c.*
8 Or, *as in solemn procession* See Ps. xlii. 4.
9 Or, *So wilt thou recover me*
10 Heb. *thou hast loved my soul from the pit.*
11 Or, *nothingness*

Hezekiah, finding himself face to face with a premature death, has no prospect of a future life to console him. Loss of life means loss of communion with God and man. As the nomad shepherd strikes his tent and departs; or as the weaver removes the cloth from the loom when it is finished, so completely does life appear to him doomed to extinction. His disease gains ground from day to night; at even he is worse than he was in the morning, and next morning again he is worse than the evening before. During the night he quiets his impatience with the hope of alleviation in the morning; yet the pain wears out his strength, and still the disease gains ground. His feverish restlessness vents itself in querulous lamentations and his eyes are wearied with turning in supplication to Jehovah. Yet what is the use of appealing to Him who has Himself inflicted the suffering? It is of no use, and he must spend what time is left to him in the inactivity and dull monotony of a sick man's existence. Yet a man's life depends on these things,—on health and vigour; and he prays to be restored to health and the enjoyment of real life. 9-11 12 13 14 15 16

His prayer has been granted, and the forgiveness of his sins brings with it the remission of the punishment. As a living man he will henceforth be able to sing grateful praises to the God who has delivered him from so great affliction. 17-20

XXXVIII. 21—22. Hezekiah's Recovery.

[1] See 2 Kings xx. 7, 8.

21 [1]Now Isaiah had said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover. 22 Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

The actual disease from which Hezekiah suffered is unknown. Plague has been suggested; or it may have been of the nature of a malignant tumour.

Verse 22 alludes to the retrogression of the shadow on the steps of Ahaz mentioned in verse 8.

XXXIX. 1, 2. THE EMBASSY FROM BABYLON.

1 [1]At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he heard that he had been sick, and 2 was recovered. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his [2]precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and all the house of his [3]armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

[1] See 2 Kings xx. 12, &c.

[2] Or, *spicery*

[3] Or, *jewels*

1 The ostensible pretext advanced by Merodach-Baladan, the usurping King of Babylon, for communicating with Hezekiah was a desire to congratulate him upon the recovery from his illness. In reality his purpose was to secure the co-operation of the King of Judah in his schemes for resisting Assyria. Since the death of Shalmaneser in 722 B.C. he had reigned in defiance of the Assyrian power, and, as he knew that Sargon would take the first opportunity of expelling him from his throne, he was anxious to stir up rebellion wherever he 2 could. Hezekiah was captivated by the plausible schemes proposed by the envoys, and hastened to give them ocular demonstration of his resources in treasure and armour, in order to prove how valuable an ally he would be to the King of Babylon.

XXXIX. 3—8. THE REPROOF OF ISAIAH.

3 Then came Isaiah, the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, 4 even from Babylon. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. 5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts. 6 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, saith 7 the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king 8 of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

To take part with the Babylonian usurper was to 35 expose the Kingdom of Judah unnecessarily to the vengeance of Assyria, and so Isaiah would not allow the King to tread on such dangerous ground without a warning. Hezekiah did not deny what he had done, though it is likely that he tried to conceal its real import. But the prophet was not to 5 be deceived and sternly foretold the consequences of the King's imprudence. His treasure would indeed 6 be carried away to Babylon, and his children would 7 be servants to the King of Babylon; but then Babylon would already have been captured by the Assyrians and Sargon would be the King of Babylon, as he actually proclaimed himself in 710 B.C. when, as Isaiah had foreseen, Merodach-Baladan found no means of resisting the Assyrian attack and was obliged to abandon his city. Hezekiah's reply 8 shows no little irritation at the prophet's rebuke. Alluding to the mention of his sons as being doomed to be carried away captive, he pretended to acquiesce with satisfaction in the threatened calamity, since it was not to take place during his own lifetime.

XX. 1—6. THE CAPTURE OF ASHDOD.

1 In the year that [1]Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the King of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took 2 it; at that time the LORD spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking 3 naked and barefoot. And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot [2]three years for a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and 4 upon [3]Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. 5 And they shall be dismayed and ashamed, because of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt, 6 their glory. And the inhabitant of this coastland shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and we, how shall we escape?

[1] The title of the Assyrian commander-in-chief

[2] Or, *to be for three years a sign &c.*

[3] Heb *Cush*

The widespread disaffection of which Merodach-Baladan tried to take advantage, had its focus in

the Philistine city of Ashdod, where the party hostile to the Assyrians had deposed from the throne Sargon's nominee and had set up as King a certain Yavan who was violently opposed to the Assyrian supremacy. Egypt had promised assistance, but at the critical moment failed to keep faith, and when the Tartan, or Commander-in-Chief of Sargon's army, arrived, the revolt soon collapsed. Yavan fled, and Ashdod was taken.

2-6 The absolute failure of the Ethiopian King to prevent the catastrophe made it quite clear to the mind of the prophet what would be the issue of the approaching struggle between Egypt and Assyria. Indeed for three years,—ever since, in fact, men began to talk of throwing off the Assyrian yoke with the help of Egyptian troops—Isaiah had by an open sign proclaimed the certainty that Egypt and Ethiopia were doomed ultimately to subjugation 7 and enslavery. If, therefore, that was the fate in store for the powerful Kingdom of Egypt on which the instigators of the rebellion counted for support, what could be hoped for from the resistance of comparatively feeble states like Philistia or Judah ?

CHAPTER VIII

Prophecies relating to Egypt and Ethiopia

AS the power of the dynasty founded by Shishak declined, the royal power in Egypt became split up among a number of paltry rulers who at first acknowledged the supremacy of the Pharoah at Memphis, but soon began to ignore his claims and aim at independence. This dynasty of Shishak never recovered from the defeat inflicted upon the Egyptian host by Asa, King of Judah (2 Chron. xiv.); and Osorkon, the Pharoah, in whose reign the battle was fought, was one of the last to wield the sceptre effectively. The disunion existing among the several districts, each of which possessed a separate King, made Egypt an easy prey to Piankhi, an ambitious monarch who reigned at Napata, the capital of Ethiopia. As Piankhi claimed descent from the Kings of Egypt and as the country of Ethiopia had already been permeated by Egyptian influence, there does not seem to have been much opposition to the establishment of his overlordship. But about the year 734 B.C. a rebellion broke out. The prince of Memphis threw off his allegiance and attacked those

other princes who still remained faithful to Piankhi. The revolt was eventually crushed, though not without difficulty, and Piankhi re-established his supremacy. His successor, however, allowed Egypt to revolt, and for six or seven years the Egyptians enjoyed independence under Bek-en-ranf, son of the Prince of Memphis who had rebelled in 734 B.C. But the next Ethiopian king, Shabak, or So, proved "a fierce lord" to the Egyptians when he crushed the rebellion and burned Bek-en-ranf alive. Thus an Ethiopian dynasty was established in Egypt in 725 B.C., which lasted until the Assyrian occupation of the country by Esarhaddon in 672 B.C. The relations of So with Palestine were simple. Without any attempt to conquer the country he regarded it as a most useful barrier between Egypt and Assyria, the ambitious designs of which latter country he had good reason to fear. Hardly had he secured the throne of Egypt when, by promises of assistance, he began to encourage Hoshea of Israel to revolt against the Assyrians (2 Kings xvii. 4). But he promised more than he could perform; Samaria was captured, and two years later the Egyptian army was defeated by Sargon at Raphia (720 B.C.) Nevertheless most of the insurrections brewed in Palestine during this period were instigated by the Egyptian king and depended on his promises of armed assistance. It is true that Egypt was rarely able to send that assistance, and that when a force was sent, it was usually quite ineffective; yet, it spite of this, So contrived to make his alliance appear very attractive, and it was as much as the Jewish prophet could do to persuade his people that to rely on Egypt was as dangerous as leaning on a broken reed.

XVIII. 1—2. THE EMBASSY.

1 Ah, the land [1]of the rustling of wings, which is beyond the rivers of [2]Ethiopia: 2 that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, [3]even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters, *saying*, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation [4]tall and smooth, to a people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation [5]that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers [6]divide!

1 Or, *shadowing with wings*
2 Heb. *Cush*
3 Or, *and*
4 Or, *dragged away and peeled*
5 Or, *meted out and trodden down* Heb. *of line, line, and of treading down*
6 Or, *have spoiled*

The land of Ethiopia corresponded roughly to the modern Soudan. It extended from about the First Cataract along the course of the Nile to somewhat South of Fashoda. Its people consisted of a number of distinct tribes which nevertheless possessed a mutual resemblance, with features coarser and more negro than those of the Egyptians. On the whole they were a fine race, and proved good soldiers from whom the Egyptian armies were largely recruited (2 Chron. xii. 3). The force defeated by Asa was to a great extent composed of Ethiopian mercenaries, and was commanded by an Ethiopian general.

In describing Ethiopia as the land filled with the rustling of wings, the writer alludes to the swarms of flies which infested the valley of the Nile. So in chapter vii. 18 the fly was taken as the characteristic insect of Egypt. The occasion of this prophecy was one of the many attempts made by the Ethiopian king Sabako, or So as he is called in the Bible, to utilise Palestine as a defensive barrier against Assyria. He had despatched ambassadors down the Nile to the court of the Jewish king. doubtless in order to organise a revolt against Assyria and to lavish promises of Egyptian aid. There is not much in the chapter to indicate the exact date, except the phrase "that meteth out and treadeth down," which points to a period not long after the subjugation of Egypt by the victorious

Sabako in 725 B.C. The same phrase renders it unlikely that the prophecy was penned after the defeat of Sabako at Raphia in 720 B.C. In fact the tone of the whole chapter, with its evident admiration for the physical qualities of the Ethiopians, and the courteous moderation of its language, points to a comparatively early period, before Isaiah found it necessary to proclaim the weakness of the Egyptian state and the danger of trusting to an alliance with it. Accordingly it is not improbable that this chapter refers to the rejection by Judah of those same proposals for insurrection which were accepted by Hoshea King of Israel, and which eventually led to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings xvii. 4). The latter part of verse 2, "Go, ye swift messengers," etc., is addressed to the envoys sent back to Sabako with the answer of the Jewish king.

XVIII. 3—6. THE ANSWER.

3 All ye inhabitants of the world, and ye dwellers on the earth, when an ensign is lifted up on the mountains, see ye; and when the trumpet is blown, hear 4 ye. For thus hath the LORD said unto me, I will be still, and I will behold in my dwelling place; [1]like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the 5 heat of harvest. For afore the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becometh a ripening grape, he shall cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and the spreading branches shall he take 6 away, *and* cut down. They shall be left together unto the ravenous birds of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the ravenous birds shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.

[1] Or, *when there is*

3 Let all the world observe the outbreak of the insurrection, that they may see how Judah is justified 4 in refusing to take part in it! For this is the true policy, namely, a peaceful neutrality which calmly watches the trend of events, quiet and still as the sultry glow which broods over the land in sunny weather, or as the fleecy cloud which hangs motion-5 less in heaven during the heat of harvest. For the rebellion will come to an untimely end, like vines

cut down when the grapes are just beginning to ripen; and those who take part in the doomed scheme will share the fate of the branches lopped 6 off the vine, when their bodies are left lying dead on the mountain winter and summer, at the mercy of birds and beasts. It will be seen therefore that the reply sent to Sabako by the Jews was one of refusal to join in a scheme of rebellion which was foredoomed to failure.

XVIII. 7. The Triumph of Jehovah.

7 In that time shall a present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people [1]tall and smooth, and from a people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts the mount Zion.

[1] See ver. 2.

Then would the policy of Judah be triumphantly justified by the overthrow of the rebels, the Ethiopians would be humbled before the Jews by the utter failure of their plans, and the Jews proved to have been truly guided in their refusal to take part with them. In this way would the Ethiopians be given up as a present into the hands of the God of Judah.

XIX. 1—4. The Subjugation of Egypt B.C. 725.

1 The [1]burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of 2 it. And I will [2]stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, *and* kingdom against 3 kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall be made void in the midst of it; and I will [3]destroy the counsel thereof; and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the [4]charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. 4 And I will [5]give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

[1] Or, *oracle concerning*
[2] Or, *join together* Or, *arm*
[3] Heb. *swallow up*
[4] Or, *whisperers*
[5] Or, *shut up*

The coming calamities are inflicted by Jehovah, 1 who rides into Egypt on a cloud, making the idols

to tremble and filling the people with fear. The
2 land is divided up into petty kingdoms, the princes
of which engage in civil strife and bloodshed, so
3 that Egypt has no longer vigour enough to resist an
invader, and its divided counsels prevent the formation of a united policy. In their distress the
Egyptians have recourse to their idols and to communications with the unseen world. This is, of
4 course, of no avail, and the realm of Egypt is given
over to the fierce Ethiopian conquerer Sabako, or
So, who, after subduing Egypt with no little
ferocity, establishes an Ethiopian dynasty which
lasts for about fifty years.

XIX. 5—10. FAILURE OF THE NILE INUNDATION.

5 And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and become dry. 6 And the rivers shall stink; the [1]streams of [2]Egypt shall be minished and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither away. 7 The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile, and all that is sown by the Nile, shall become dry, be driven away, and be no more. 8 The fishers also shall lament, and all they that cast angle into the Nile shall mourn, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. 9 Moreover they that work in combed flax, and they that weave [3]white cloth, 10 shall be ashamed. And her [4]pillars shall be broken in pieces, all they [5]that work for hire *shall be* grieved in soul.

1 Or, *canals*
2 Heb. *Mazor*
3 Or, *cotton*
4 Or, *foundations*
5 Or, *that make dams*

In these verses there is a reference to a not
uncommon calamity in Egypt, the failure of the Nile
to rise to a height necessary for flooding the fields.
Such a deficiency of water, leading to dire famine
and distress, would prove a terrible aggravation of
5 the miseries of invasion. Instead of the expected
flood of fertilising streams, the water of the Nile
begins to fail. Then the irrigation channels are
6 unfilled and breed unwholesome effluvia; the reeds
7 by the Nile banks wither away; the meadows become
8 parched and sterile; and the fishermen find their
9 toil in vain. But the distress extends further, for
the failure of the flax-crop brings ruin to those who

win their livelihood by weaving linen. The calamity is as fatal to the men of high position, employers of labour, here referred to as "the pillars," as it is to the poor labourers themselves. 10

XIX. 11—15. The Confusion of Egypt.

11 The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the counsel of the wisest counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of 12 ancient kings? Where then are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now: and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed concerning 13 Egypt. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of [1]Noph are deceived; they have caused Egypt to go astray, that are the corner stone of her tribes. The LORD 14 hath mingled a spirit of perverseness in the midst of her: and they have caused Egypt to go astray in every work thereof, as a drunken man [2]staggereth in his vomit. Neither 15 shall there be for Egypt any work, which head or tail, palm-branch or rush, may do.

[1] Or, *Memphis*

[2] Or, *goeth astray*

The prophet returns to the subject of the political condition of Egypt. It should be remembered that between the death of Piankhi and the accession to the Ethiopian throne of the fierce Sabako, there was a period in which Egypt enjoyed independence under the rule of Bek-en-ranf. This Pharoah had his headquarters either at Sais, where he was eventually captured and burnt alive by Sabako, or at Memphis (Noph). The other districts of Egypt were ruled by princes who owned nominal allegiance to Pharoah. In the present passage the writer exposes the incapacity of these princes to agree to any concerted action which could save Egypt from the Ethiopian invader. Allusion is made to their quarrels for precedence and their claims to descent from the ancient kings of Egypt. They were all quite incompetent to deal with the situation, and only led Egypt to her downfall. They had no plan ready to be adopted and carried out by any of the Egyptians, high or low. In fact the whole passage vividly 11 12-14 15

describes the utter unpreparedness and confusion which rendered Sabako's conquest of Egypt such an easy task.

XIX. 16—22. The Conversion of Egypt.

16 In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. 17 And the land of Judah shall become a terror unto Egypt, [1]every one to whom mention is made thereof shall be afraid, because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts, which he purposeth against it.

18 In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called The city of [2]destruction.

19 In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. 20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and [3]a defender, and he shall deliver them. 21 And the LORD shall [4]be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day; yea, they shall worship with sacrifice and oblation, and shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and shall perform it. 22 And the LORD shall smite Egypt, smiting and healing; and they shall return unto the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them.

1 Or, *every one that maketh mention thereof, to him shall they turn in fear*
2 Or, *Heres* Or, according to another reading, *the sun*
3 Or, *a mighty one*
4 Or, *make himself known*

16 Stricken with fear and trembling like women the Egyptians will recognise that their calamities come 17 from Jehovah, and will regard with fear and reverence 18 Jehovah's own land of Judah. They will adopt the Hebrew language as well as the Hebrew God; and one of the five centres of Jewish influence will be Heliopolis, the famous city of On (Gen. xli. 45), and the seat of the Egyptian worship of the Sun. For the name Heliopolis means "city of the sun," which appears a probable correction for "city of destruc- 19 tion." The worship of Jehovah will be conducted with due sacrificial rites, and at the entrance of the land an obelisk, like those of which there are so 20 many in Egypt, will be dedicated to Jehovah as a sign that the Egyptians, when hard pressed, called upon Him and were delivered. Thus the true 21 religion would be established in Egypt and calamities

prove a blessing in turning the land to the knowledge of Jehovah.

XIX. 23—25. JUDAH AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN EGYPT AND ASSYRIA.

23 In that day shall there be a high way out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians.
24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the
25 earth: for that the LORD of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

The ideal vision of a converted Egypt is here extended. Judah is the mediating state, using her central position to spread the knowledge of Jehovah throughout Egypt and Assyria. In this way, as well as by bringing peaceful relations between these two hostile states, Judah will indeed prove a blessing in the land and will justify her favoured position as the special inheritance of the Lord of hosts.

CHAPTER IX

Prophecies relating to the period of peace preceding the Invasion of Sennacherib.

LITTLE information can be gathered of the events which occurred in Palestine between Sargon's invasion of 711 B.C. and the great invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. The period seems to have been one of considerable prosperity for the Kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah was successful in war against the Philistines (2 Kings xviii. 8); he accumulated much treasure and completed works for the defence of Jerusalem and for the improvement of its water supply (2 Chron. xxxii. 4-5, 27-33). His religious reforms had made the worship of Jehovah a reality once more; his material prosperity enabled him to throw off the yoke of Assyria and assert his independence. For advice he could rely upon the inspired experience of Isaiah, who was then already well advanced in years. The writings of the prophet which may be assigned to this period (xi. 1-9; xxxii.) breathe a spirit of sanguine idealism well in keeping with a time of peace and happiness; even the faults which call for rebuke are those bred of prosperity and ease.

XI. 1—9. THE IDEAL KINGDOM.

1 And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots 2 shall bear fruit: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the 3 fear of the LORD; and [1]his [2]delight shall be in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge, after the sight of his eyes neither [3]reprove after the 4 hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the [7]earth: and he shall smite the [7]earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he 5 slay the wicked. And righteousnesss shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of 6 his reins. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child 7 shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw 8 like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the [4]basilisk's den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

1 Or, *he shall be of quick understanding*
2 Heb. *scent.*
3 Or, *decide*
4 Or, *adder's*

It is possible that this description of an ideal sovereign ruling under ideal conditions was originally suggested by the reign of Hezekiah himself who, in contrast with his predecessors, was an upright, godly king ruling over a prosperous and contented people. This ideal king, who was to combine all (1-3) the qualifications of a wise ruler and a righteous judge would belong to the Davidic dynasty; he would protect the poor and destroy the wicked; in (4) his actions he would be upright and trustworthy. (5) Even the brute creation would share in the universal (6-8) regeneration, and their fierceness be changed to gentleness. Forgetting their mutual antipathy, beasts of prey would dwell peacefully with their quarry; and animals, regaining once more their confidence in man, would welcome a child as their playmate or their guide. This happy state would be (9) the result of the spread of the knowledge of Jehovah.

Written in the flush of hope and joy caused by the revival of religion, this vision contains nothing, at

least in the first five verses, which was incapable of fulfilment in its literal sense during the lifetime of the prophet. It was not an unattainable state of perfection, projected into some vague period of the future, that Isaiah described to his countrymen. The wicked still existed and needed repression and punishment (verse 4). It was the reign of a true and upright man filled with the spirit of God and guiding his actions by the dictates of justice and religion that Isaiah had in view, and if, after his manner, he idealised the conception by including the regeneration of the animal creation, he did not thereby deprive it of its practical significance for the men of his own day. Nevertheless, no human ruler could fully satisfy the requirements of the prophecy; it was not until the Messiah was revealed from heaven, that the vision attained its ultimate fulfilment.

XXXII. 1—8. (The same).

1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgement. 2 And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. 3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be [1]dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. 4 The heart also of the [2]rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. 5 The [3]vile person shall be no more called [4]liberal, nor the [5]churl said to be bountiful. 6 For the [3]vile person will speak [6]villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practice profaneness, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. 7 The instruments also of the churl are evil; he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the [7]meek with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. 8 But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and [8]in liberal things shall he continue.

1 Or, *closed*
2 Heb. *hasty*
3 Or, *fool* See 1 Sam. xxv. 25.
4 Or, *noble*
5 Or, *crafty*
6 Or, *folly*
7 Or, *poor*
8 Or, *by liberal things shall he stand*

Both this and the preceding passages bear evident marks of having been written in a time of peace. They do not speak of deliverance from a cruel enemy, but of righteousness and judgment in the ruler, and straightforwardness and truth in the

ruled. No doubt, in spite of Hezekiah's noble reforms, there yet existed much that was evil, much tyranny and oppressiveness among the subordinate officials of state, and much cringing and hypocrisy among the people,—relics of the system under which flattery of the great was the sole road to success. But the reign of Hezekiah opened to the prophet the prospect of a nobler epoch about to dawn on the land. The King and every prince 2 holding power under him, so far from using their opportunities for their own profit, would prove a real protection to the poor when in trouble. Those 3 who were invested with offices of importance and difficulty would be duly endowed with the qualities necessary to fulfil them. Those politicians who 4 were given to the hasty expression of ill-considered opinions would pause until they had weighed the question with more care and discretion; those, on the other hand, who lacked the capacity for expressing their views clearly, would find that hindrance removed. Each man would be judged by his true 5 worth; there would be no imposters cloaking 6 villainy under fair speech and defrauding the weak of their rightful due. How often had the mean and 7 selfish man outwitted his guileless neighbour with sharp practices, making the worse appear the better argument by a crafty distortion of the truth! Yet in this ideal kingdom honesty would prove indeed 8 the best policy.

XXXII. 9—20. A Warning.

9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease, *and* hear my voice; ye [1]careless daughters, give ear unto 10 my speech. [2]For days beyond a year shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the ingathering 11 shall not come. Tremble, ye women that are at ease: be troubled, ye careless ones; strip you, and make you bare, and [3]gird *sackcloth* upon your 12 loins. They shall smite upon the breasts for the pleasant fields, for the

[1] Heb. *confident.*
[2] Or, *After a year and days* Heb. *Days above a year*
[3] Or, *put a girdle upon*

13 fruitful vine. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous 14 city, for the palace shall be forsaken; the populous city shall be deserted; [4]the hill and the watch-tower shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, 15 a pasture of flocks; until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a 16 forest. Then judgement shall dwell in the wilderness and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful 17 field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever. 18 And my people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. 19 But it shall hail, in the downfall of the forest; and the city shall be 20 utterly laid low. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass.

4 Or, *Ophel*

From prosperity was bred the carelessness for which Isaiah here rebukes the women of Jerusalem. The passage recalls Chapter iii. 16-26; but there is a wide difference between the tone adopted here and the scathing denunciations uttered on the previous occasion. The feelings of ease and security in which the women of Hezekiah's reign indulged, were doubtless foolish and even wrong; but they were far removed from the insolent luxuriousness of the women who roused the prophet's wrath in the days of Jotham and Ahaz.

11 It seems best to regard this prophecy not as having been penned with special reference to any particular event, but as a general warning against thoughtless security at a time when the land, though enjoying peace then, might at any moment be overwhelmed by an Assyrian invasion. The aged Sargon must sooner or later give place to an energetic successor, and then the prophet knew that there would surely follow an attempt to reduce Palestine once more to subjection, an attempt 12-13 which was certain to result in the devastation of the 14 land and probably also in the destruction of the city. Verse 14, with its mention of the palace, the crowded quarters of the city, the side of the Temple-

hill called Ophel (2 Chron. xxvii. 3), and the buildings on it, evidently has in view the capture and desolation of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem was not captured until 599 B.C., so that the prophecy, as a prediction of the future, was not literally fulfilled for more than a hundred years. Yet even in 701 B.C. the city was only saved by a miracle, and Isaiah was justified in holding up for the warning of the careless women a calamity, which was only too likely to be the result of an Assyrian invasion.

[15] When the Spirit of God was spread abroad among the people (cp. Joel ii. 28) the result would be (1) a renewed fertility of the land, so that what was before regarded as a fruitful field would then by comparison be considered but as forest-land; (2) a [16] moral regeneration showing itself in judgment and [17-18] righteousness; (3) peace and freedom from invasion. [19] But the hail of Divine punishment would first have descended, and the forest of luxury and pride have been swept away, when the city, the centre of [20] civilisation and luxury, was laid low; so that only those who cultivated the fields and fed cattle could in those days be called prosperous.

The latter part of the passage appears to indicate the abolition of city-life with the evils which accompany advanced civilisation, and the return to the primitive simplicity of agricultural or pastoral life. This the prophet regards as a result, and a fortunate result of the overthrow of Jerusalem. So, in verse 16, judgment and righteousness are regarded as being established, after the fall of the city, in the pasture-land of the "wilderness" and in the cultivated fields.

CHAPTER X

Invasion Anticipated

THE freedom from hostile interference, which Judah had for some years enjoyed, was largely due to the advanced age and infirmity of the King of Assyria. Sargon was of considerable age when he ascended the throne in 722 B.C., and he had already reigned seventeen years, so that the once vigorous monarch was by this time no longer able to maintain the prestige of the Assyrian arms. But in 705 B.C. Sargon was murdered, and his son Sennacherib succeeded him. The accession of a young and energetic monarch was a warning to the nations of Palestine to expect ere long the troubles of an Assyrian invasion.

XXIX. 1—4. THE STORM PREDICTED.

1 [1]Ho [2]Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! add ye year to year; let the feasts come round: 2 then will I distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation: [3]and she shall be unto me as 3 Ariel. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a fort, and I will raise siege works against 4 thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust; and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall [4]whisper out of the dust.

1 Or, *Woe to*
2 That is, *The lion of God* or, *The hearth of God*
3 Or, *yet*
4 Or, *chirp*

1 The Temple ritual had been restored by Hezekiah, and daily the Jews witnessed the morning and evening sacrifice offered on the altar. It is not strange, therefore, that Isaiah should have thought of the city of Jerusalem as an Altar, the Altar-

hearth of Jehovah (cp. Ezekiel xliii. 16). For a few years more the sacrifical animal would be duly slain at the altar ; and then dire distress would befall Jerusalem, and the city would win a right to the name of "Altar-hearth." For the sacrifices would consist of the victims of war, and the altar would be the besieged city itself, bathed in the life-blood of its defenders! 2

From the expressions used in the latter half of the first verse, it may be inferred that Isaiah did not anticipate an immediate attack from Assyria, though in spite of a few years' respite, he foresaw that an invasion was inevitable. Accordingly the composition of the prophecy may be assigned to the period immediately following the succession of Sennacherib to the throne of Assyria in 705 B.C. After that date it was clear that an invasion of Palestine would take place, though it might be, and in fact was, deferred for several years until 701 B.C. In verses 3 and 4 the prophet announces a siege of Jerusalem, in which resistance would be reduced to a very low ebb. The spirits of the besieged would be so crushed that their voices would sound like the thin shrill squeak traditionally ascribed to the ghosts which were raised by wizards, possibly with the aid of ventriloquism (cp. viii. 19). 3

XXIX. 5—8. The Deliverance of Ariel.

5 But the multitude of thy [1]foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant 6 suddenly. [2]She shall be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of 7 a devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her stronghold, and that distress her, shall be as a dream, a 8 vision of the night. And it shall be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against Mount Zion.

[1] Heb. *strangers.*

[2] Or, *There shall be a visitation from the Lord &c.*

Yet already the prophet foretells the ultimate destruction of the enemy and the deliverance of Ariel, God's Altar. Like dust, or like the chaff blown away at the winnowing of grain, so the Assyrian hosts would be dissipated suddenly, and by the direct intervention of Jehovah's might displayed in the powers of nature. As unsubstantial as the imagined draughts of water quaffed by a thirsty man in his dreams; or the visionary banquet suggested to a sleeper's fancy by his craving for food; so unreal would the horrors of invasion and siege appear, when the hostile armies had melted away, as a dream melts into oblivion when the dreamer awakes from his sleep.

XXIX. 9—12. The Blindness of the Politicians.

9 [1]Tarry ye and wonder; [2]take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with 10 strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed [3]your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, 11 hath he covered. And all vision is become unto you as the words of a [4]book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that [5]is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot, for it is 12 sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

1 Or, *Be ye amazed*
2 Or, *blind yourselves and be blind*
3 Or, *your eyes; the prophets, and &c.*
4 Or, *writing*
5 Heb. *knoweth writing (or letters)*

When Isaiah first announced the approaching danger, the politicians of Jerusalem were filled with consternation, refusing to believe or prepare for the impending disaster. With a blind folly comparable 10 only to that produced by intoxication, they preferred to shut their eyes to the danger and believe fondly in the continuation of the peace which the State had hitherto enjoyed. The predictions of the 11 prophet were rejected by the educated because they 12 would not, and by the uneducated because they could not understand.

XXIX. 13—16. Secret Intrigues.

13 And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh *unto me*, and with their mouth and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been [1]taught *them*: 14 therefore, behold I will [2]proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. 15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? 16 and who knoweth us? [3]Ye turn things upside down! shall the potter be counted as clay: that the thing made should say of him that made it, He made me not; or the thing framed say of him that framed it, He hath no understanding?

[1] Or, *learned* by rote
[2] Or, *again do* Heb. *add to do*
[3] Or, *O your perversity!*

The Jews had been willing to restore the worship 13 of Jehovah with its ritual and its services; but when it was a case of directing their political actions in accordance with the will of Jehovah as revealed by the mouth of His prophet, then it became evident that their religion was but lip-service, and due merely to the commands of King Hezekiah and the fashion set by his court. The politicians of 14 Jerusalem had evolved schemes for defence against Assyria which were doomed to failure. These 15 schemes, which doubtless depended mainly on an alliance with Egypt, were so completely at variance with the views held by Isaiah and his party, that they had to be concealed carefully. Such secrecy, 16 however, was certain to prove futile, since the Jews could not make themselves independent of Jehovah or claim superior wisdom to that of their Creator, any more than a pot could deny the handiwork of the potter who made it.

XXIX. 17—24. The Future.

17 Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be counted for a 18 forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of [1]the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out 19 of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of 20 Israel. For the terrible

[1] Or, *a book or writing*

one is brought to nought, and the scorner ceaseth, and all they that watch for iniquity are cut off: 21 that [2]make a man an offender in a cause, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just with a 22 thing of nought. Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax 23 pale. [3]But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name; yea, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel. 24 They also that err in spirit [4]shall come to understanding, and they that murmur shall learn [5]doctrine.

2 Or, *make men to offend by their words*

3 Or, *But when his children see &c*

4 Heb. *shall know understanding.*

5 Or. *instruction*

Recalling the prediction of a brighter future to come, made in Chapter xxxii. 15 ff., the prophet 17 bids the people expect ere long its fulfilment in a material prosperity which would bring into cultivation the wild, untilled lands of which Lebanon was a type, so as to beggar in fertility the fields formerly esteemed fruitful. And again, recalling the rebuke 18 of verses 9 and 12 of this chapter, he foresees that men will then no longer be deaf or blind in respect 19 of their spiritual perceptions. While the lower classes of the down-trodden and the poor found ever-increasing joy in the favour and protection of 20 Jehovah, those of the upper classes who were guilty of tyrannical oppression, of disregard for religious and social obligations, and of deliberate indulgence 21 in sin; those who secured the condemnation of a man by false witness; who by some crafty device induced the judge to give an unfair decision, or defrauded the just of his rights on some frivolous legal technicality; all these would be banished from 22 the land. In that time there would be no shame or panic for the nation, as was the case when Isaiah wrote this passage; but, blessed with an abundant 22 population, it would worship Jehovah in truth; 24 while those who had formerly erred, whether through ignorance or obstinacy, would alike come to the knowledge of the truth.

XXX. 1—7. The Egyptian Alliance.

1 Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take Counsel, but not of me; and that [1]cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may 2 add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to [2]strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! 3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt 4 your confusion. For his princes are at Zoan, and his ambassadors are come 5 to Hanes. They shall all be ashamed of a people that cannot profit them, that are not an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

6 The [3]burden of the beasts of the South

Through the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not 7 profit *them*. For Egypt helpeth in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I [4]called her Rahab that sitteth still.

1 Or, *weave a web* Or, *pour out a drink-offering* Or, *make a league*
2 Or, *flee to the strong-hold of Pharaoh*
3 Or, *oracle concerning*
4 Or, *cried concerning this. They are but arrogancy: be still*

The secret counsels, darkly referred to in xxix. 15, are here openly criticised. The words "cover with a covering" in the first verse may allude to the attempt at concealment; but the other rendering "pour a libation," which is equivalent in meaning to "make a treaty," since the libation formed an essential part of treaty formalities, gives better sense. The treaty with Egypt is here expressly stated to be contrary to the will of God, and the trust in Egyptian aid against Assyria to be doomed to lead to disappointment.

On the death of Sabako in 712 B.C. the Kingdom of Ethiopia, with its capital at Napata, passed into the hands of Tirhakah, while Egypt, though subject to the Ethiopian suzerain, was actually ruled by Shabatok, the son of Sabako. Shabatok called himself Pharoah and held sovereignty in Memphis over a number of subordinate princedoms or nomes into which Egypt was divided. It is this overlordship of Pharoah to which Isaiah alludes in verse 4: "his subject princes hold authority at Tanis (Zoan) in the Delta, while he sends his envoys to Heracleo- 4

polis (Hanes)" at the other extremity of Lower
5 Egypt. Yet it was evident that no effectual help was to be got from Shabatok in spite of his wide
6 sovereignty in Egypt. It was in vain therefore that the Jews had sent ambassadors on a long and perilous journey through lands infested by fierce beasts and venomous serpents; in vain that they had expended their treasure in providing a rich present to send to the Egyptian King, whose aid, even when obtained, would prove of no avail. On each occasion that Egypt had promised help, the help had either not been sent at all, or if sent had proved absolutely unequal to coping with the danger. And so it would be again. Egypt might well be called
7 "Rahab that does nothing!" The word Rahab, meaning "Arrogance," originally denoted a kind of sea-serpent, as in Chapter li. 9; it was then applied to Egypt apparently with an allusion to the arrogant pretensions of that country (cp. Psalm lxxxvii. 4).

XXX. 8—17. Its Iniquity.

8 Now, go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come [1]for ever and ever.
9 For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the [2]law of the Lord:
10 which say to the seers See not: and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy
11 deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease
12 from before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel. Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay
13 thereon; therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an
14 instant. And he shall break it as a potter's vessel is broken, breaking it in pieces without sparing: so that there shall not be found among the pieces thereof a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the
15 cistern. For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would
16 not. But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.
17 One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as [3]a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.

[1] Or, according to some ancient authorities, *for a witness for ever*
[2] Or, *teaching*
[3] Or, *a mast*

The Jews refused to accept Isaiah's warning against the alliance with Egypt, and so the warning was to be recorded clearly in a book, in order that when the alliance ended in failure there might be in existence a proof that the failure had been predicted. The same idea is found in chapter xlv. 21. For the Jews were proving impatient of advice and only anxious to be rid of troublesome instructors with their unwelcome reminders about the Holy One of Israel. Yet ultimately they could not ignore the Holy One. They might dispise His counsel in favour of their own schemes, which depended for success upon oppressive taxation—taxation possibly in part designed to raise money for the present to Pharoah—and were the result of perverted obstinacy. Yet this iniquitous plan of alliance with Egypt would in the end be like an ill-built wall, which shows first a crack, then bulges out and finally crashes down in sudden ruin. Thus complete would be the failure of their plans. 9-10 11 12 13 14

Now the counsel of the Holy One of Israel, referred to in verse 12 as "this word," is given in verse 15. Its wisdom will be the more evident when it is remembered that an Assyrian invasion was like a flood sweeping irresistibly through the land for a time and then retiring. The greater the resistance, the greater the havoc; the states most active in rebellion found themselves most the mark for Assyrian vengeance. Hence the safest plan for the Jews was to remain quiet when the invasion swept by; if attacked, as doubtless they would be, they must trust to Jehovah to defend them; but if they attracted no attention by making alliances or organising resistance, they might hope that the attention of Sennacherib would be directed chiefly 15

towards more dangerous states, such as Philistia and Egypt. But this policy was not to the taste of the Jews, who preferred more active measures, depending on horses able to carry them on in the charge; though equally useful, as the writer grimly forecasts, to carry them away in flight. And even in flight the vaunted swiftness of their horses would be surpassed by the speed of their pursuers. So that the ultimate result of resistance would be the complete prostration and isolation of the Jews.

XXX. 18—26. Final Deliverance.

18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgement; blessed are all they that wait for him. 19 For [1]the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more; he will surely be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he 20 shall hear, he will answer thee. [2]And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy [3]teachers [4]be hidden any more, but thine eyes shall see thy [3]teachers: 21 and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when 22 ye turn to the left. And ye shall defile the overlaying of thy graven images of silver, and the plating of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt [5]cast them away as an [6]unclean thing; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence. 23 And he shall give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the ground, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in 24 large pastures. The oxen likewise and the young asses that till the ground shall eat [7]savoury provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel 25 and with the fan. And there shall be upon every lofty mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers *and* streams of waters, in the day of the great slaughter, 26 when the towers fall. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

1 Or, *O people that dwellest in Zion at Jerusalem*
2 Or, *And the Lord will give . . . and thy teachers shall not &c.*
3 Or, *teacher*
4 Or, *hide themselves*
5 Heb. *scatter.*
6 Heb. *menstruous*
7 Heb. *salted*

Since the Jews were resolved to follow their own ways, God would leave them to feel the consequences of their own folly. But at the last moment, when all human devices had proved futile, God would Himself deliver them; blessed were those who confidently expected that deliverance. For God would

hear their cry when in the extremity of distress; and [19] though He allowed them to be afflicted, yet that affliction would make them amenable to instruction. [20] No longer would their teachers be scouted and ignored. Conscience, too, would raise her voice to [21] direct them in the right way; idolatry would be [22] swept away; the land would be fruitful; the cattle [23] would have abundant pasture-land in which to feed, and their fodder would be the choicest and prepared [24] with the greatest care; on the arid uplands would [25] flow abundance of water, in the day when the Lord destroyed His enemies and laid low their pride. The universal participation of Nature in the restoration [26] of the Jews would extend even to the sun and moon, the light of which would be increased sevenfold in the day of deliverance.

XXX. 27—33. THE COMING STORM.

27 Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is 28 as a devouring fire: and his breath is an overflowing stream, that reacheth even unto the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of [1]vanity: and a bridle that causeth to err *shall be* in the jaws of the 29 peoples. Ye shall have a song as in the night [2]when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock 30 of Israel. And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his* anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with [3]a blast, and tempest, and hailstones. 31 For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be broken in pieces, [4]which 32 smote with a rod. And every [5]stroke of the [6]appointed staff, which the LORD shall lay upon him, shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with 33 them. For [7]a Topheth is prepared of old; yea, for the king it is made ready; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

1 Or, *destruction*
2 Or, *when a feast is hallowed*
3 Or, *crashing*
4 Or, *with his rod shall he smite him*
5 Heb. *passing*
6 Or, *staff of doom* (Heb. *foundation*)
7 See 2 Kings xxiii. 10, Jer. vii. 31.

In the distance is seen a storm; Jehovah approaches wrapped in cloud and flashing fire; as [27] the tempest bursts, the streams swell with water [28] and, rising as high as a man's neck, overflow the surrounding country. Such is the coming of the

Lord in judgment on the nations, to sift them with the sieve of destruction. The Assyrian people will be infatuated, so that they rush on to their ruin.
29 But while the storm breaks around, Jehovah's own people remain in joyful security. The overthrow of their enemies will be celebrated with songs, as when the Passover feast is kept and the procession of worshippers is led to the glad sound of music up the
30 slope to the Temple of God. The thunder and the lightening, the wind and the hail may rage without, but they are for the enemies of Judah. The
31 Assyrian invader will be beaten down, smitten with
32 the rod of Jehovah; and every stroke inflicted on the foe will be the occasion for rejoicing with tabret and harp. With swinging blows shall the Lord fight in
33 the battle. And for the Assyrian king, for Sennacherib and his host, there is prepared a Tophet, or burning-place like that in the valley of Hinnom to the South of Jerusalem where human sacrifices were once burnt to Moloch; this burning-place is made deep and large, and is kindled by the breath of the Lord, as by a subterranean fire welling up in a stream of burning brimstone.

XXXI. 1—5. Aid from Egypt.

1 Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses; and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek 2 the LORD! Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work 3 iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit: and when the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is holpen shall fall, and they all shall fail 4 together. For thus saith the LORD unto me, Like as when the lion growleth and the young lion over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, he will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight [1]upon Mount Zion, and [1]upon the hill 5 thereof. As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver *it*, he will pass over and preserve *it*.

[1] Or, *against*

It is clear that a main part of the contingent promised by Egypt was to consist of cavalry. Horses were not bred in Palestine, and when introduced were almost entirely used for warlike purposes. They were considered as an indication of military pride, and in general were looked upon with disfavour by those who preferred a levy of rustic militia for the purposes of defence, to the use of professional soldiers. In the present case, confidence in Egyptian cavalry involved a corresponding distrust in the deliverance promised by Jehovah, as well as an unwillingness to be guided by His counsel. Yet the 2 politicians who had formed the Egyptian alliance could not claim the monopoly of wisdom. Jehovah also was wise and would not draw back from His intention of bringing evil on those who wrought evil, and of proving the uselessness of the aid in which they trusted. Of what avail were mere men like 3 the Egyptians against God, or horses against the Spirit of God? Both helper and helped would fall together.

In verse 4, under the figure of a lion holding his 4 prey, unscared by the cries of the shepherds who try to force him to drop it, there is represented a rivalry, so to speak, for the privilege of defending Jerusalem. On the one hand Jehovah claims the right to protect His people, and He will not yield it to anyone else; on the other hand a large party in Jerusalem wished to put the safety of the city in the hands of the Egyptians, who, in the simile, are represented by the shepherds. But God was purposed to protect 5 Jerusalem effectually, even as birds defend their nests by hovering over them.

XXXI. 6—9. Return to Jehovah.

6 Turn ye unto him [1]from whom [2]ye have deeply revolted, O children of Israel. 7 For in that day they shall cast away every man his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. 8 Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of man; and the sword, not of men, shall devour him: and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become tributary. 9 And his rock shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

[1] Or, *from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted*
[2] Heb. *they*

6 The prophet calls on the Jews not to imitate the example of the Northern Kingdom of Israel which revolted so deeply, but to return to Jehovah (*mar-*
7 *ginal rendering*). Then would be abolished the sin of idolatry, that crowning act of disloyalty; the
8 Assyrian invader, overthrown by the sword, not of man, but of God Himself, would retreat to a place
9 of safety, while his officers would shrink back in dread from the standard of Jehovah. Thus it would be shown that God had a fire in Zion and a furnace in Jerusalem which would prove the fiery destruction of His enemies; and this would be a new significance for the name of Ariel, God's altar-hearth, which was given to Jerusalem in chapter xxix.

CHAPTER XI

The Invasion. 701 B.C.

IN 701 B.C. Sennacherib set out on his expedition against Palestine. Lulia, King of Tyre and Zidon, was his first antagonist, and chapter xxiii. contains Isaiah's comments on the siege of Tyre, and the flight of Lulia to Cyprus. Tyre held out, but Zidon and many other Phœnician towns were captured. Most of the peoples of Palestine then tendered their submission, but Askelon, Ekron, and Judah resolved to persist. Askelon was soon captured, and then the Assyrians attacked Ekron. The king of that city, by name Padi, being a faithful supporter of the Assyrian supremacy, had been deposed by the Ekronites and handed over for safe keeping to Hezekiah. But Sennacherib, after defeating at Eltekeh the Egyptian force sent to the assistance of Ekron, demanded of Hezekiah the surrender of his prisoner, and as Hezekiah did not dare to refuse, Padi was restored to the throne of Ekron. Then the Assyrians attacked the cities of Judah (2 Kings xviii. 13) and captured forty-six of them, the territory being divided among those Philistine kings who had already submitted. Lachish was one of the last to fall, and while Sennacherib was besieging that city, Hezekiah attempted to purchase more lenient treatment by submitting to a heavy fine of gold and silver, which he took from

the temple and from his own treasures. But Sennacherib took the money and then treacherously made further demands. Sending his officers with a considerable force to besiege Jerusalem, he required complete submission from Hezekiah. Further, he made no secret of his intention of treating the Jews as his father had treated the inhabitants of Samaria, by deporting a large number of them from their homes into some other district of the Assyrian dominions. Hezekiah was encouraged to resist these demands; and soon after, Sennacherib failed in an attempted invasion of Egypt owing to a mysterious scourge which destroyed a large proportion of his army. The Assyrians returned home, and for the rest of his reign Sennacherib refrained from interfering with the affairs of Palestine. In 680 B.C. Sennacherib was murdered by his two sons Adrammelek and Nergal-Sharezer (2 Kings xix. 37).

XXIII. 1—14. The Attack on Tyre and Zidon.

1 The [1]burden of Tyre.
Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Kittim it is revealed 2 to them. Be still, ye inhabitants of the [2]isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. 3 And on great waters the seed of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile, was her revenue; and she was the 4 mart of nations. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, the stronghold of the sea, saying, I have not travailed, nor brought forth, neither have I nourished young men, nor brought up virgins. 5 [3]When the report cometh to Egypt, they shall be sorely pained at the report 6 of Tyre. Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the [2]isle. 7 Is this your joyous *city*, whose antiquity is [4]of ancient days, whose feet carried her afar off to 8 sojourn? Who hath purposed this against Tyre, [5]the crowning *city*, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? 9 The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to [6]stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. 10 [7]Pass through thy land as the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish; there is no girdle *about thee* any more. 11 He hath stretched out his hand over the sea, he hath shaken the kingdoms: the LORD hath given commandment concerning [8]Canaan, to destroy the 12 strongholds thereof. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou

1 Or, *oracle concerning*
2 Or, *coastland*
3 Or, *As at the report concerning Egypt, so &c.*
4 Or, *of ancient days? her own feet shall carry &c.*
5 Or, *that giveth crowns*
6 Heb *profane*
7 Or, *Overflow*
8 Or, *the merchant people*

oppressed virgin daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Kittim; even there shalt thou have no rest. 13 Behold, the land of the Chaldeans; this people is [9]no more; the Assyrian [10]hath appointed it for [11] the beasts of the wilderness: they set up [12]their towers, they [13]overthrew the palaces thereof; he 14 made it a ruin. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your stronghold is laid waste.

9 Or, *was not*
10 Or, *founded*
11 Or, *them that dwell in the wilderness*
12 Or, *the towers thereof*
13 Or, *raised up*

The first stage in Sennacherib's invasion of Palestine was an attack on Zidon. The king of this city, Lulia by name, abandoned his country to the enemy and fled in a Tyrian ship to the island of Cyprus or Chittim. Tyre was then besieged, though it does not appear to have been taken. The fall of Zidon and the siege of Tyre involved the cessation 1 of the Phœnician trade with foreign ports, of which Tarshish or Tartessus in the South of Spain is taken as a representative example. News of the disaster was transmitted through the island of Cyprus to Tartessus, warning captains of vessels that there were no longer any means of entering the Phœnician harbours. The commercial activity of the coast- 2 lands of the Mediterranean, where Phœnician enterprise had established countless trade centres, came then to a complete standstill. Trade in the seed of 3 Shihor, *i.e.*, in Egyptian grain, since Shihor seems to have been another name for the Nile (Jer. ii. 18), had been a source of great gain. In fact, Phœnicia had been the very hub of the world's commerce. Yet now Zidon was overthrown and her people were 4 no better off than if they had never been nourished from her merchandise and her traffic on the sea. The calamity which had befallen Tyre would cause 5-6 consternation in Egypt, Tarshish, and the coastlands, where trade would be paralysed by the downfall of the city. How changed was Tyre now from 7 that once joyful city which boasted of immemorial antiquity and which despatched trading ventures to

8 far distant quarters of the world! To the question, who had devised this counsel against Tyre, the city that had royal crowns in her gift, and whose successful merchants ranked in honour with the highest and noblest of the earth, the answer is given that the Lord of Hosts had purposed it in order to humble the pride of those honourable merchant princes!

10 The fall of Tyre is said to cause Tarshish to overflow the land like an inundation of the Nile, and also to lose its girdle. This passage will afford considerable difficulty until the conditions are realised under which a city like Tartessus existed. It is true that some of the Phœnician colonies (*e.g.*, Carthage) developed into independent cities as great as, or even greater than the parent city. But in most cases the colony was a trading factory which had sprung into existence to meet the requirements of commerce, and which continued only so long as those requirements lasted. Planted on the coast with the acquiescence, more or less, of the surrounding native population, Tartessus was doubtless an outpost of Phœnician civilisation in which Tyrian merchants only settled for the sake of a lucrative trade with the mother city. But if once that trade were interrupted by disaster in Phœnicia itself, then the Phœnician population in the distant colony would at once melt away. Tartessus would lose its girdle, *i.e.*, the distinctive Phœnician element which separated the city off from the surrounding native population and gave it its essential strength. Then what had once been a Tyrian colony would soon be merged into the barbarism of the neighbouring Spanish peoples.

11 In the next verse also the writer has in view the

ruin of the Tyrian colonies which would result from the disaster to Tyre. The Lord shakes the kingdoms over the sea; for if Tyre, the focus of trade, is destroyed, then the Canaanite, *i.e.*, Phœnician strongholds which were dotted about all over the Mediterranean shores, were doomed to irrevocable ruin.

Again the prophet turns to Zidon in pity for her distress. Lulia, King of Zidon, not caring to face the Assyrian storm, deserted his country and fled by sea to Cyprus. No doubt he was accompanied by many of the citizens also. But the prophet warns the fugitives that even in Cyprus they could not consider themselves safe. Let them consider the fate of Chaldæa which had just suffered a fearful chastisement at the hands of Sennacherib in 703 B.C. just before the present invasion of Palestine. The passage closes, as it began, with an allusion to the paralysis of Phœnician trade with the West. 12 13

XXIII. 15—18. THE RESTORATION OF TYRE.

15 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years [1]it shall be unto Tyre as in the song of the harlot. 16 Take an harp, go about the city; thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. 17 And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall return to her hire, and shall play the harlot with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. 18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for [2]durable clothing.

[1] Or, *shall Tyre sing as an harlot*

[2] Or, *stately*

It is not known what is meant by the limitation of Tyre's abasement to seventy years, unless merely an indefinite period of time be intended. The phrase "according to the days of one King" is also difficult. It is possible that the period of seventy years may be the period of Babylonian supremacy

607—538 B.C. during which the Jewish captivity lasted. In that case "the days of one King" will refer to the Babylonian dynasty. This explanation would transfer verses 15-18 to the body of prophecies which refer to the captivity in Babylon. Tyre was taken by the Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar in 573 B.C. after a siege of thirteen years.

Verse 16 is no doubt a stanza from a popular song, alluding to a harlot who, after ceasing to ply her trade for a time, returned to it again. So Tyre would be restored to her commercial prosperity. Yet the prosperity of Tyre would then redound to the advantage of the Lord's people in Judæa who would gain both food and clothing from intercourse with the great Phœnician merchants.

X. 5—19. The Instrument of Jehovah's Vengeance.

5 [1]Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! 6 I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and [2]to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. 8 For he saith, are not my princes all of them kings? 9 Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as 10 Damascus? As my hand hath [3]found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; 11 shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will [4]punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory 13 of his high looks. For he hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and I have brought down as a valiant man 14 them [5]that sit *on thrones*: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the 15 mouth, or chirped. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if a rod should shake them that lift it up, *or* as if a staff should lift up *him that is* not wood.

16 Therefore shall the Lord, the LORD of hosts send among his fat ones

1 Or, *Woe to Asshur*
2 Heb. *to make them a treading down*
3 Or, *reached*
4 Heb. *visit upon.*
5 Or, *the inhabitants*

[6] Or, instead of

leanness; and [6]under his glory there shall be kindled a burning like the burning 17 of fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and 18 his briers in one day. And he shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and it shall be [7]as when a standard-19 bearer fainteth. And the remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

[7] Or, as when a sick man pineth away

The Assyrian King had received a commission from Jehovah to execute judgment upon those peoples who by their wickedness had merited punishment. Yet he had not realised that he was only an instrument in the hands of a higher power; he imagined that it was by his own might that had been enabled to overcome so many nations. For a similar idea in connection with the call of Cyrus, see Isaiah xlv. 4 and 5. 5

In the pride of his heart he beheld his officers exercising the power of Kings in the conquered countries, and he counted the cities which had fallen before the assault of the Assyrian armies. *Calno* was captured by Tiglath-Pileser in 738 B.C.; *Carchemish,* the Hittite capital, had submitted to him in 743 B.C., but in the reign of Sargon its King, Pisiris, revolted. The town was easily captured, however; Pisiris and his treasures fell into the hands of the Assyrians and the people were led captive to various parts of the Assyrian Empire in 717 B.C. *Hamath,* having rebelled in alliance with Uzziah, King of Judah, was subdued by Tiglath-Pileser in his Syrian campaign of 738 B.C. immediately after the capture of Calno. Its lands were annexed and assigned to Assyrian generals (cp. verse 8). The city was again taken by Sargon in 720 B.C. when more than four thousand Assyrian colonists were introduced and an Assyrian governor appointed. *Arpad* endured a severe siege for nearly two years and was finally captured by Tiglath- 8 9

Pileser in 740 B.C. *Damascus* was taken by the same King after a siege lasting from 734—732 B.C. The fall of *Samaria* was in 722 B.C.

10 Thus the Assyrian monarch reflected that he—or, to be more precise, his predecessors—had experienced little difficulty in subduing these cities, although their idols surpassed those of Samaria and 11 Jerusalem, the weakness of which had been abundantly proved by the fall of Samaria!

12 The consequence of Sennacherib's haughty attitude was that as soon as ever he had fulfilled the purpose for which he had been sent against Jerusalem, he would be punished by Jehovah for the words and acts which had been the outcome of his 13 stubborn pride. He claimed not only the power to strike hard in war, but also political adroitness in organising his conquests. He had removed peoples from their native lands and planted them elsewhere, thereby following a method much in favour with later Assyrian kings for crushing national spirit. The captivity of the Israelites is an example. He 14 had plundered the riches of the people as easily as if they were eggs left forsaken in a nest, in defence of which there was no mother bird to flap the wing, peck with her bill, or utter cries of rage and fear.

15 Yet he forgot that he was as much an instrument in the hand of God as the axe is in the hand of the 16 hewer. Therefore his fatness would become leanness, and his pride be consumed in the fire. Israel 17 was destined to be the occasion of his destruction, 18 the light to kindle the flame which would consume his glory as completely as a forest fire devours the fields and crops. So that in the end the Assyrians would be as weak as a fainting man, and as few as

scattered trees which even a child finds no difficulty 19 in counting.

X. 20—27. PUNISHMENT BUT NOT EXTERMINATION.

20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and they that are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in 21 truth. [1]A remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty 22 God. For though [2]thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, *only* a remnant [3]of them shall return: a consumption *is* determined, overflowing 23 with righteousness. For a consummation, and that determined, shall the Lord, the LORD of hosts, make in the midst of all the [4]earth.

24 Therefore, thus saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of [5]the Assyrian: though he smite thee with the rod, and lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of 25 Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall be accomplished, and [6]mine anger, 26 in their destruction. And the LORD of hosts shall stir up against him a scourge, as in the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and [7]his rod shall be over the sea, and he shall lift it up after the 27 manner of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall depart from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed [8]because of [9]the anointing.

1 Heb. *shear jashub.* See ch vii. 3.
2 Or, *thy people, O Israel*
3 Heb. *in it.*
4 Or, *land*
5 Heb. *Asshur.*
6 Or, *mine anger shall be to their &c.*
7 Or, *as his rod was over the sea, so shall he &c.*
8 Or, *by reason of fatness*
9 Heb. *oil.*

The name Israel is here used in its wider significance, as applied to the whole nation of Israel, undivided into two rival kingdoms, to God's ancient people descended from the patriarch Jacob. A large proportion of this nation was doomed to destruction, so that only a remnant would survive to return to Jehovah. The Northern Kingdom had already suffered its fate, so that Judah only remained. But even Judah was about to be subjected to the ordeal of an Assyrian invasion which would leave the remnant still smaller.

Since therefore the prophet is speaking of a remnant of the whole Israelitish nation and not of Judah alone, it is impossible to see in the words "stay upon him that smote them" any allusion to the alliance made with Assyria by Ahaz, the King of Judah, against his enemy the King of Israel

(734 B.C.). The true explanation is suggested by verse 24. The prophet is once more denouncing the
20 alliance with Egypt. The regenerate remnant of Israel would trust in Jehovah for safety and not in an alliance with Egypt, that ancient oppressor of
21 Israel. For indeed Israel was not to be lost absolutely. A remnant would return to God and be saved; yet, on the other hand, out of the
22 multitude of Israelites, it would after all be only a few, a mere remnant which would be saved. The punishment decreed, though a thoroughly righteous
23 one, was, in fact, a decisive work of destruction among the people of Israel:

24 According there was still hope for the people of Zion in the confident belief that they were the remnant which would survive the punishment inflicted by God through the Assyrians. The Assyrian invasion was intended to be a trial similar to that of the Egyptian oppression. But just as
25 Israel was saved at last from Egypt, so now God's indignation would soon be satisfied, and then His anger would be directed to the destruction of the Assyrians, as formerly it had been to the slaughter of the Midianites (Judges vii. 25) or the discomfiture
26 of Egypt at the Exodus (Ex. xiv. 15-31). Then would the Jews be able successfully to throw off the
27 Assyrian yoke and assert their independence in consequence of the increase of their power and prosperity.

X. 28—34. THE APPROACH OF THE INVADER.

[1] Or, *Geba is our lodging*, they cry

28 He is come to Aiath, he is passed through Migron; at Michmash he layeth up
29 his baggage: they are gone over the pass; [1]they have taken up their lodging at Geba: Ramah trembleth; Gibeah of Saul is
30 fled. Cry aloud with thy voice, O daughter of Gallim! hearken, O Laishah! [2]O thou poor Ana-
31 thoth! Madmenah is a fugitive; the inhabitants of Gebim [3]gather them-
32 selves to flee. This very

[2] Or, as otherwise read, *answer her, O Ana-*

thoth! 3 Or, make their households flee 4 Another reading is, house.

day shall he halt at Nob: he shaketh his hand at the mount of the [4]daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

33 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the boughs with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the lofty shall be 34 brought low And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

The Assyrian host is in full march for the border of the Kingdom of Judah. It has already reached Ai, and before it, at but a short distance to the S.E., lies Michmash at the head of the famous pass at the Southern end of which is Geba (1 Sam. xiv. 4-5). The Assyrian outposts have pressed on as far as Migron (ib. verse 2), some way beyond the pass, doubtless in order to cover the passage of the main body, which is as yet encamped with all the baggage at Michmash at the Northern end of the pass. And now the pass is safely crossed, and the invader bivouacs at Geba to the South of it. Panic seizes the places lying between Geba and Jerusalem. Clearly they are all in the track of an invader, though the positions of Gallim, Laishah, Madmenah, and Gebim are uncertain. Nob (1 Sam. xxi. 1) must have been close to Jerusalem; when there, the foe is within striking distance of Zion. But in the very moment of triumph the Lord hews him down, as the forest-trees of Lebanon are felled by the axe of a mighty woodman.

28 29

30-31

32

33-34

We learn from the Assyrian records that Sennacherib's route from Phœnicia to Philistia was along the coast. The force sent to attack Jerusalem may well have been sent into the hill country by one of the passes which lead up from the maritime plain and so have advanced towards Jerusalem from the North.

XXII. 1—7. The Defeat.

1 The [1]burden of the valley of vision.

What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone 2 up to the housetops? O thou that art full of shoutings, a tumultuous city, a joyous town; thy slain are not slain with the sword, neither are they dead in 3 battle. All thy rulers fled away together, they were bound [2]by the archers: all that were found of thee were bound together, 4 [3]they fled afar off. Therefore said I, Look away from me, I will weep bitterly; [4]labour not to comfort me, for the spoiling of the daughter of my 5 people. For it is a day of discomfiture, and of treading down, and of perplexity, from the Lord, the LORD of hosts, in the valley of vision; a breaking down of the walls, and a crying to the [5]mountains. 6 And Elam bare the quiver, with [6]chariots of men *and* horsemen; and Kir un-7 covered the shield. And it came to pass, that thy choicest valleys were full of chariots, and the horsemen set themselves in array at the gate.

2 Or, *without the bow*
3 Or, *which had fled from far*
4 Or, *hasten*
5 Or, *mountain*
6 Or, *troops*

1-2 On the eve of the great struggle with Assyria. Jerusalem was full of excitement and hopefulness, In accordance with the policy of active resistance, so expressly condemned by Isaiah, an attempt had evidently been made to meet the Assyrians in the open field. Much had been expected from the battle. Crowds of people thronged the housetops; everywhere was to be seen a jubilant spirit, which, however, accorded ill with the actual results of the 3 engagement. For only a feeble resistance had been made; the troops, following the example of their officers, threw away their bows and sought safety in flight. Many however had been taken prisoners 2 and subsequently put to death by their Assyrian 4 captors—"Leave me alone," cries the prophet, "to weep for the overthrow of my people!" Terrible 5 calamity menaced the city at the hand of Jehovah in the "valley of vision"—a phrase of uncertain meaning, referring either to some actual valley near Jerusalem in which the defeat took place; or perhaps a figurative expression denoting the prophetic inspiration of Isaiah which enabled him to foresee the coming disaster.

The enemy were doubtless in full progress towards the city. It was expected that the Assyrians would soon be in a position to begin to batter down the walls, compelling the inhabitants to cry out for protection to the very mountains (cp. Hoshea x. 8). The troops about to be engaged in the attack were 6 archers from the land of Elam (Jer. xlix. 35), the modern Susiana which Sennacherib had recently reduced (703 B.C.); chariots carrying fighting men, cavalry, and infantry armed with large shields, drawn from the land of Kir, the position of which is uncertain. Already the prophet sees the valleys full 7 of chariots and the cavalry riding up to the gates.

XXII. 8—11. Preparations for Defence.

8 And he took away the covering of Judah; and thou didst look in that day to the armour in the house 9 of the forest. And ye saw the breaches of the city of David, that they were many: and ye gathered together the waters of the 10 lower pool. And ye numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and ye brake down the houses to fortify the 11 wall. Ye made also a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye looked not unto [1]him that had done this, neither had ye respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.

[1] Or, *the maker thereof*

The approach of the enemy had been the means of bringing to light the condition of the fortifica- 8 tions of Jerusalem. The arsenal in the house of the forest of Lebanon (1 Kings vii. 2) was visited and the armour examined. It was found that the wall 9 of the city had fallen into disrepair in many places and that alterations were necessary in the water supply. These alterations were designed not merely to supply the city with water during a siege, but chiefly to prevent the besieging army from obtaining any. "For why," it was asked, "should the Kings of Assyria come and find much water?" (2 Chron. xxxii. 4).

Hezekiah is said to have "gathered together the

waters of the lower pool." These were the Lower Waters of Gihon, now called Birket-es-Sultan, in the valley of Hinnom. The object of the work was to stop up the spring outside the wall in such a way as to render it unavailable for the enemy, and to conduct the water inside the city for the use of the inhabitants. This may be concluded from Hezekiah's similar treatment of the Upper Waters of Gihon (the Birket Mamilla) which he stopped up and brought "straight down on the west side of the city of David" (2 Chron. xxxii. 30). The conduit leading from these Upper Waters of Gihon, as well as the pool within the walls which receives the discharge, still exists.

10 To supply the material needed for the repair of the breeches in the wall, mentioned at the beginning of verse 9, the requisite number of houses had 11 been counted off and demolished. The surplus waters from the Old Pool, probably the pool of Siloam, were prevented from escaping by the construction of a reservoir to hold them. The space between the two walls was that between the old wall of Solomon, which forms a deep re-entrant angle, when it turns south to enclose Ophel, and the outer wall built by the later Kings, which included the pool of Siloam within its circuit. Thus every precaution had been taken; the only thing neglected had been the recognition of Jehovah, the Creator of the pool which the Jews were thus turning to their own use.

XXII. 12—14. Reckless Impenitence.

12 And in that day did the Lord, the LORD of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with 13 sackcloth: and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die. 14 And the LORD of hosts revealed himself in mine ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be [1]purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

[1] Or, *expiated by*

The proper attitude for the Jews under their trial would have been one of penitential sorrow; in actual fact, feasting and reckless self-indulgence held sway in the city. Such impenitence could be met by no penalty short of death.

12 13 14

XXII. 15—19. THE DEPOSITION OF SHEBNA.

15 Thus saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this [1]treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, *and say*, 16 What doest thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out here a sepulchre? hewing him out a sepulchre on high, graving an habitation for himself in the rock! 17 Behold, the LORD will hurl thee away violently, [2]as a *strong* man: yea, he will [3]wrap 18 thee up closely. He will surely [4]turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die, and there shall be the chariots of thy glory, thou shame of thy lord's house. 19 And I will thrust thee from thine office, and from thy station shall he pull thee down.

1 Or, *steward*
2 Or, *O thou strong man*
3 Or, *lay fast hold on thee*
4 Or, *wind thee round and round like a ball* and toss thee

The crimes of which Shebna, the treasurer, was guilty, can only be conjectured; but they can be conjectured with tolerable certainty. In the first place he must have been a supporter of the policy which Isaiah condemned; secondly, he could not resist the temptation of turning his office to his own profit and that of his relatives; thirdly, he assumed an air of arrogant superiority, which was not calculated to conciliate favour. Finally, it would appear that he was a foreigner; that, at least, is the natura interpretation to give to the indignant questions of verse 16:—"What business have *you* here? What connection of race or kindred have you in Jerusalem to justify your constructing a sepulchre to be a family burying-place for yourself and your descendants? What right, in fact, have you, a foreigner, to pretend to be the founder of a family?" The vigour of the language in which the prophet foretells the captivity of Shebna, makes it probable that it was due in large measure to political antipathy. If the

16 17 19

treasurer was responsible for the alliance with Egypt, Isaiah might well threaten him with exile in a large country, *i.e.*, in Assyria; since he had, in the prophet's judgment, done his best to bring that fate upon his countrymen. Again, the mention in verse 18 of the "chariots of his glory," suggests a picture of the oriental pride and luxury which distinguished Shebna's life. The office of Shebna (verse 15) was, of course, a very high one; and he had not failed to make that fact aggressively patent by the magnificence of his surroundings. That he misused the public funds may be inferred from his being called the shame of his lord's house, as well as from what is said in verse 24.

XXII. 20—25. His Successor.

20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of 21 Hilkiah; and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the 22 house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and 23 none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a throne of glory to his father's house. 24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, every small vessel, from the vessels of cups even to all 25 the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that was fastened in a sure place give way; and it shall be hewn down, and fall, and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off; for the LORD hath spoken it.

20-21 Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah would thenceforth wear the treasurer's robe and girdle of office. As governor in Shebna's place he would by his beneficent rule show himself a father to the Jews, in marked contrast to Shebna whose chief anxiety seems to have been to make himself the founder of 22 a family. The importance of the position and the absolute power enjoyed by the "chamberlain" is expressed in verse 22. The next verse contrasts the

fortunes of Eliakim with those of his predecessor. Instead of being "tossed like a ball into a large 23 country," like Shebna, Eliakim was to enjoy stability and security in his office. He would be a "throne of glory to his father's house;" that is, he was no foreigner like Shebna, but belonged to a true Jewish family, with ancestors to whose honour he would contribute. Still less would he be the "shame of his lord's house!" Finally—here the 24 prophet adopts a tone of sarcasm—all those opportunities for lending a helping hand to his relatives, great and small, by giving them comfortable offices in the government, would be henceforth in the power of Eliakim. This remark did not necessarily imply that Eliakim would take advantage of those opportunities; but it does imply that Shebna had, and the writer ill conceals his satisfaction at seeing that it was no longer in his power to do so. Then by a transition of thought not difficult to 25 follow, the prophet reflects that this sin of nepotism, or the abuse of the privileges of office for the advancement of relatives, is bound to bring ruin to him who commits it. No matter how strong the position of an official may be, yet, if he abuses his power, he will infallibly fall and bring down with him all the crowd of dependents whose fortunes he had preferred above honour and the interests of the state.

CHAPTER XII.

The Siege.

AT this stage it may be convenient to recall the circumstances of the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Sennacherib, after subduing Phoenicia and most of Palestine, at last found himself free to deal with the rebellious states of Askelon, Ekron and Judah. Askelon fell; and Ekron was compelled to receive back its exiled King Padi whom the rebellious Ekronites had sent in bonds to Hezekiah for safe keeping. The Jewish King did not dare to refuse Sennacherib's demand for the surrender of his prisoner. The futility of the Egyptian alliance also was clearly demonstrated by the complete defeat at Eltekeh of an Egyptian force sent to the relief of the Ekronites. Last of all came the attack on Hezekiah. The Assyrians came up against "all the fenced cities of Judah and took them" (2 Kings xviii. 13). According to the account given by the Assyrians themselves, no fewer than forty-six fenced cities were taken. At this point Hezekiah's courage failed him, and he determined on submission. Sennacherib was besieging Lachish at the time when Hezekiah's embassy arrived, and from his camp before that city he imposed on the Jewish King an enormous fine, including amongst other items, thirty talents of gold and three hundred talents of silver, besides

precious stones. To meet this call on the resources of his treasury, Hezekiah was driven to strip the Temple of its silver and gold (2 Kings xviii. 13-16).

This submission, however, was regarded by the Assyrian monarch as inadequate. It is true that he had accepted the treasure; but he was not by any means above using treachery in his dealings with his enemies (Is. xxxiii. 1 and 8). Accordingly he despatched a force against Jerusalem, directing his Rabshakeh to demand what was practically the unconditional surrender of the city. Nor did the Rabshakeh conceal his master's intention of carrying away the Jews into captivity. But Hezekiah trusted in God, and rejected the demand; the apparently inevitable siege of Jerusalem, however, with its appalling consequences of destruction and captivity, was prevented by the sudden overthrow which befell the Assyrian host on the borders of Egypt. It is hardly necessary to remark that the latter incident is not mentioned in the native Assyrian records.

XXXIII. 1—12. THE DEVASTATION OF JUDAH.

1 Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou hast ceased to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou hast made an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. 2 O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. 3 At the noise of the tumult the peoples are fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations are scattered. 4 And your spoil shall be gathered as the caterpillar gathereth: as locusts leap shall they leap upon it. 5 The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgement and righteousness. 6 [1]And there shall be stability in thy times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge: the fear of the LORD is his treasure. 7 Behold, their valiant ones cry without: the ambassadors of peace 8 weep bitterly. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth not man. 9 The land mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and withereth away: Sharon is like [2]a desert; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their

[1] Or, *And abundance of salvation wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times*

[2] Or, *the Arabah*

10 *leaves*. Now will I arise, saith the LORD; now will I lift up myself; now will 11 I be exalted. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath is a fire that shall 12 devour you. And the peoples shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire.

1 The first verse clearly regards the Assyrian attack as unprovoked and in violation of an agreement faithfully observed on the side of the Jews, but treacherously broken by their enemies. It appears probable from chapter xxii. 1-7 that the Jews, in accordance with the policy of open resistance to the invader and reliance on help from Egypt, which had been adopted in spite of Isaiah's disapproval, had actually offered some opposition to the Assyrians in the open field, feeble and ineffectual though that opposition proved to be. After this failure, the opposite party evidently came into power, with a policy of concession and at least temporary submission until the powerful invader should have turned his back. Thus Hezekiah had complied with the demand of Sennacherib for the surrender of his prisoner Padi, the exiled King of Ekron. He had also attempted to buy off the hostility of the invader by the payment of gold and silver. This, then, was the treachery mentioned in verse 1 and again referred to in verse 8. Sennacherib had taken the money, and yet had still continued his aggressive operations against the fenced cities of Judah, and even further, had demanded the surrender of Jerusalem itself. 2 Following on this denunciation of Assyrian treachery comes an appeal to Jehovah for assistance: for strength to be given to those Jews who were in the country, the defenders perhaps of some fenced city such as Lachish, at that moment besieged ("be thou *their* arm"); and for salvation for those who, like the prophet himself, were in Jerusalem hourly expecting a similar fate.

The writer then recalls the ineffectual resistance which has been made to the Assyrian advance. He [3] is again addressing Sennacherib, as in the first verse. Doubtless he had in mind the disgraceful flight of the Jews referred to in chapter xxii. 1-3, as well as the defeat of the Egyptians at Eltekeh. When all resistance had been quelled, the Assyrian [4] conqueror fell upon the spoil which lay only waiting to be gathered. The havoc wrought by his roving bands was comparable only to the effects of a visitation of locusts. The word caterpillar means the same as locust, the comparison being between an invasion of Assyrians and one of locusts in point of (1) the thoroughness and (2) the avidity, with which the word of desolation was carried out. For a poetical description of an invasion of locusts see the first two chapters of Joel.

The next two verses form a kind of reply or anti- [5] strophe to verses 3 and 4. In spite of all that the Assyrian can do, the Lord is still supreme ; and if Zion is the abode of righteousness, that will enlist [6] on its behalf the Divine strength and protection. The most valuable possession that Zion can have is its "fear of the Lord."

Again the prophet turns, in another strophe of [7] three verses in length (7-9), to the pitiable state of his native land. The phrase "valiant ones" is usually taken to mean "warriors," but it is more likely to be a variant designation of the "ambassadors of peace" mentioned in the latter part of the verse. What good cause these ambassadors of peace had for weeping, has already been explained. The embassy sent by Hezekiah with the humble message (2 Kings xviii. 14), "I have offended: that which thou puttest on me, will I

bear," was doubtless composed of persons of sufficient standing and importance at Jerusalem to render their message acceptable to the Assyrian monarch. These, then, were the "valiant ones" who wept for the worse than failure of their 8 Embassy. Desolation reigns everywhere; no one dares to travel over the highways which have been swept by the invader. Neither the treaty made by Hezekiah and broken by Sennacherib, nor the fortifications of the fenced cities avail to check the Assyrian advance; "he regardeth no man." The 9 fairest spots in Palestine—cedar-clad Lebanon in the North; the wide-spreading oak-forests of the plain of Sharon; the richly-cultivated promontory of Carmel and the Eastern range of Bashan—these, taken as representative regions, indicate by withering branch and falling leaf the general desolation which has befallen the country.

10 But the answer is ready in verses 10-12. If the fortunes of the land are at their worst, then now is 11 the time for Jehovah to arise. The enterprises of the Assyrians will be like chaff or stubble; their own activity in prosecuting them will be the flame to kindle the chaff, and themselves will be the victims 12 of the ensuing conflagration (chap. i. 31). As completely as lime burned in the kiln, and as easily and inextinguishably as chopped thorns, shall the Assyrian hosts be consumed in the fire of their own kindling.

XXXIII. 13—24. Vindication of God's Power to Save.

13 Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge 14 my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath surprised the godless ones. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with 15 everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously,

and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of [1]oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from 16 looking upon evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: his bread shall be given *him*; his waters shall be 17 sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold [2]a far 18 stretching land. Thine heart shall muse on the terror: where is [3]he that counted, where is he that weighed *the tribute*? where is he that counted the 19 towers? Thou shalt not see the fierce people, a people of a deep speech that thou canst not perceive; of a [4]strange tongue that thou canst not under-20 stand. Look upon Zion, the city of our [5]solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof 21 be broken. But there the LORD will be with us in majesty, [6]a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. 22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he 23 will save us. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not strengthen the foot of their mast, they could not spread the sail: then was the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame took the 24 prey. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

1 Or, *fraud*
2 Or, *a land that is very far off* Heb. *a land of far distances*
3 Or, *the scribe*
4 Or, *stammering*
5 Or, *set feasts*
6 Or, *but in the place... streams there shall go &c.*

That deliverance will come from God, is the message here addressed alike to those far off in the country of Judæa, and to those who dwell near in the city of Jerusalem. The sinners who had refused to take God into account in their schemes for defence against Assyria; the godless who had preferred secret plottings with Egypt to trust in Jehovah—these had good reason to fear. All their devices had broken down, and they found themselves stript of resources (cp. verse 23) and face to face with the "devouring fire," the "everlasting burnings" of an Assyrian invasion which they were helpless to resist. But the righteous man who refrained from lying, oppression, and bribery; who detested even hearing about deeds of bloodshed or the sight of wrong-doing, might count on security from danger and a sure supply of the necessaries of life. To such an one the prophet addresses a message bright with hopefulness. "Thine eyes,"

13 14 15 16

17 he writes, "shall see King Hezekiah once more restored to the position of wealth and magnificence which he enjoyed before the invasion; and the land no longer diminished by whole regions taken away and appropriated by the foe." Sennacherib had taken the towns on the Western side of Judæa and had assigned them to the Kings of the four Philistine cities of Ashdod, Askelon, Ekron and Gaza which had submitted to him. Isaiah therefore foresees the time when the Jews would be able to recover 18 those lost lands; when the terror of the invasion would be a thing of the past, a thing only to be "mused on." The treacherous Assyrian officials who had counted the precious stones, and weighed the shekels of silver and gold which Hezekiah had paid as tribute, would then be gone; gone, those reconnoitring Assyrians whose work was to estimate the strength of the fortifications with a view to 19 assault; gone, those fierce invaders whose foreign speech could not be understood. Jerusalem would 20 then be the centre of religious life and a place to dwell in securely, like a tent that would never fall 21 through loosened stake or broken cord. The Lord would protect it as well as if it were surrounded by a broad stream of water; better, indeed, since water might be crossed by ships of war, but the defence provided by Jehovah would be impenetrable. 22 Jehovah would be alike Judge, Law-giver, King and 23 Saviour. Miserable indeed were mere human contrivings compared with deliverance such as this. Those who had been so active in preparing means of defence now found their devices ineffectual; they could neither raise the mast nor spread the sail. The prey fell to those who, knowing themselves to be helpless, had looked for help to God. No longer

would the inhabitant of Judæa lament his miserable fate; his sin would be forgiven him, and, consequently, his prosperity restored. 24

XXXVI. 1—22. THE SUMMONS TO SURRENDER.

1 [1]Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that [2]Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. 2 And the king of Assyria sent [3]Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the high way of the fuller's field. 3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the [4]scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the [5]recorder. 4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? 5 I say *thy* counsel and strength for the war are but vain words: now on whom dost thou trust that thou hast rebelled against me? 6 Behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust on him. 7 But if thou say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar? 8 Now therefore, I pray thee, [6]give pledges to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 9 How then canst thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10 And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? The LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it. 11 Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the [7]Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. 12 But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? *hath he* not *sent me* to the men that sit upon the wall, to eat their own dung, and to drink their own water with you? 13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. 14 Thus saith the King, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you: 15 neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, [8]Make your peace with me, and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern: 17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18 Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where are the gods of Hamath

1 See 2 Kings xviii. 13, 17, &c.
2 Heb. *Sanherib.*
3 The title of an Assyrian officer.
4 Or, *secretary*
5 Or, *chronicler*
6 Or, *make a wager with*
7 Heb. *Aramean*
8 Heb. *Make with me a blessing*

and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20 Who are they among all the gods of these countries that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of 21 my hand? But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him 22 not. Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

Chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii. give a detailed account of the attempt made by Sennacherib to gain possession of the capital of Judæa. Two things appear from the narrative; first, that owing to the menacing attitude of Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia, the Assyrians were not in a position to direct the whole of their strength against the city; and, secondly, that, conscious of weakness, Sennacherib attempted to obtain by bluster what he could not easily take by force. The "great army" sent with the Rabshakeh to terrify the Jews into submission could not well have been spared, when a conflict with so formidable a foe as Ethiopia was in view. To this must be added the great natural strength of Jerusalem itself. The city was surrounded on all sides, except the North, by deep ravines rising to hills on the other side. It had been carefully fortified by successive Kings. It was well provided with water within the walls, while an invader found every source of supply without the walls carefully blocked up. The Assyrians were sure to find a siege of Jerusalem a long and tedious process.

1 If Hezekiah came to the throne in 728 B.C. the fourteenth year of his reign would be 714 B.C. But the invasion of Sennacherib took place in 701 B.C. If, on the other hand, the date of his accession be assigned to the year 715 B.C. so that the invasion may come fourteen years after, there is the further difficulty that in 2 Kings xviii. 10 the fall of Samaria,

which took place in 722 B.C. as the Assyrian records demonstrate, is dated as taking place in the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign. It is impossible to make a final decision between these two dates, 728 and 715 B.C.; the former seems the more probable, and has been adopted in this book.

The Rabshakeh sent to demand the surrender of Jerusalem was the "chief of the staff," a high Assyrian officer, just as the Tartan mentioned in chapter xx. was the commander-in-chief of the army. By the grim irony of destiny, the spot selected by the Rabshakeh from which to address the Jews was the same as where Isaiah had interviewed King Ahaz more than thirty years before, when, by a terribly mistaken policy, the Jewish King had summoned the Assyrians to save him from the invading Israelite and his Syrian ally. It was on the North-West of the city, where the conduit led the Upper Waters of Gihon into what is still called Hezekiah's Pool within the walls. Then came forth Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, who, as was mentioned in chapter xxii. had superseded Shebna in the office of chamberlain. The bombastic speech of the Rabshakeh is thoroughly characteristic of Assyrian arrogance; yet his estimate of the Egyptian Pharoah is not inaccurate. Egypt had all along proved to be very like a reed which, being already cracked, allows the hand that leans on it to fall on to its jagged edges and be cut. The policy of the Egyptian King had always been to encourage rebellion against Assyria by promises of assistance; but when the crisis came, the assistance failed. On the subject of Hezekiah's religious reforms the Rabshakeh's ideas are more hazy; he actually represents them as having been an injury to Jehovah, in as much as His local shrines

2

3

4-6

7

had been destroyed and His worship confined to
8 Jerusalem. The Assyrian then tauntingly suggests
a "wager" between Hezekiah and the Assyrian
king; the latter, he says, will generously provide the
Jews with two thousand horses, if Hezekiah on his
part can supply the riders. He knows very well
that there are not two thousand men in the whole of
Jerusalem who can ride a war-horse; so weak is
9 Hezekiah in cavalry. How then can the Jews
hope to meet in combat even a detachment of the
10 Assyrian army? They certainly must not hope for
cavalry or chariots from Egypt. Finally, the Rab-
shakeh ends his speech by a somewhat clumsy jest
at the expense of the religious feelings of the
Jews.

11 Verse 11 proves that the place of the interview
was not far outside the city walls. The Assyrian
12 wished to be heard by the men on the walls who
were being thus dragged by the insane policy of
their rulers into all the horrors of a siege, and so
13 henceforth shouted the rest of his speech for the
benefit of the inhabitants of the city, ignoring the
Jewish embassy and drawing nearer to the walls for
14-15 the purpose. He urged the hopelessness of resist-
ance and recommended an immediate surrender.
16 Thus would the Jews be enabled to continue the
17 cultivation and enjoyment of their lands. It was
true that when Sennacherib had completed his
Egyptian campaign, he would carry the Jews away
into exile; but their new home would be as fertile as
18-20 their old. Jehovah would prove as impotent to
protect as the gods of those other cities which had
fallen a prey to the Assyrian conqueror.

But the words of the Rabshakeh were received in
21-22 dead silence, and the Jewish officials moved away

into the city to report to the king the results of their interview.

XXXVII. 1—7. Isaiah is consulted.

1 See 2 Kings xix.

1 [1]And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna, the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. 3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength 4 to bring forth. It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, [2]whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant 5 that is left. So the servants of king Hezekiah 6 came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed 7 me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

2 Or, *wherewith the king of Assyria . . . hath sent him*

In his distress at the news of the Rabshakeh's blasphemy, Hezekiah had recourse in the first instance to his God. Then he sent to the prophet who had always based his hopeful attitude on the expectation of help from Jehovah. Clad in mourning the deputation of priests, headed by Eliakim and Shebna, approached Isaiah. It was the day of his triumph. His adversaries were now completely silenced, and the policy for which he had so unflinchingly contended, was at last publicly vindicated. The situation was described under the threefold aspect of (1) trouble as felt by the Jews; (2) rebuke or punishment as inflicted by God; and (3) contumely, *i.e.*, insult or blasphemy as uttered by the enemy against Jehovah and His people. For the blasphemy Jehovah might be willing to take vengeance on the enemy; and Isaiah was begged by the deputation to offer his prayers, which were more

likely to be acceptable than their own, on behalf of the surviving "remnant." Notice that the deputation adopts Isaiah's own phraseology. The reply 6-7 was encouraging. Sennacherib would be seized with a fit of nervousness, so that the mere rumour of approaching danger would be sufficient to make him retreat to his own land where the doom of assassination awaited him.

XXXVII. 8—13. Sennacherib's Letter.

8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from 9 Lachish. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come out to fight against thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to 10 Hezekiah, saying, Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by [1]destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be 12 delivered? Have the Gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and [2]Ivvah?

[1] Heb. *devoting them.*

[2] In 2 Kings xvii. 24, *Avva.*

8 Meanwhile Sennacherib had moved his army nearer to Jerusalem. He had received the spoils of Lachish, and now Libnah lay in his way. This city must first be taken before making an attack in 9 force on Jerusalem. But news of the hostile movements of Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia, necessitated his immediate attention. One more attempt he would make to terrify Hezekiah into submission, before he advanced to meet the Egyptians. The 10-11 letter he addressed to the Jewish King assumed that Jehovah was no stronger than the gods of the cities which his predecessors on the throne of Assyria had already subdued. Gozan (2 Kings xvii. 12 6) was on the river Chaboras, a tributary of the Euphrates in Northern Mesopotamia. It lay to the

East of Haran, home of the patriarch Abraham, and famous in Roman times as Charræ. Rezeph was between the Euphrates and Palmyra. Telessar and Eden (Ezekiel xxvii. 23) were on the East of the Euphrates. Hamath, conquered by Tiglath-Pileser in 738 B.C. was in Syria on the river Orontes. Arpad fell in 740 B.C. It was considerably North of Hamath. Sepharvaim is probably the same as Sipar on the borders of Mesopotamia and Babylonia. Hena and Ivvah are unknown. 13

XXXVII. 14—20. HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER.

14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before 15 the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, 16 saying, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, that [1]sittest upon the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven 17 and earth. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. 18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries and their 19 land, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed 20 them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only.

[1] Or, *dwellest between*

Hezekiah took the letter into the Temple, to show it to his God who dwelt on the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place, between the Cherubim (Exodus xxv. 17 ff.), although He was alone the Sovereign and Creator of the Universe. As before, in the message sent to Isaiah, the King based his hope of deliverance on the fact that the Assyrian had insulted Jehovah. He admitted that all the boasts which Sennacherib had made about his conquest of the nations were true; but the gods of the nations were mere idols. Let Jehovah prove that He is God indeed! 14-16 17 18 19 20

XXXVII. 21—35. Isaiah's Message.

21 Then Isaiah, the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is 22 the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head [1]at 23 thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of 24 Israel. By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice [2]fir trees thereof: and I will enter into his farthest height, the forest 25 of his fruitful field. I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of [3]Egypt. 26 Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous 27 heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as [4]a field *of corn* before it be grown 28 up. But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy raging against me. 29 Because of thy raging against me, and for that [5]thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou 30 camest. And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same? and in the third year sow ye, and reap and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. 31 And [6]the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear 32 fruit upward For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of mount Zion they that shall escape: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall 33 perform this. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast a mount against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith 35 the LORD. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

1 Heb. *after*

2 Or, *cypress*

3 Or, *defence* Heb. *Mazor* See ch. xix. 6.

4 In 2 Kings xix. 26, *corn blasted*

5 Or, *thy careless ease*

6 Heb. *the escaped of the house of Judah that remain*

21 This time the prophet waits for no deputation. 22 He knows his word will be welcomed. The "daughter of Zion," *i.e.*, Jerusalem, was virgin, because the city had not been captured. She could therefore mock at the crestfallen invader and shake her head in scorn (cp. Matthew xxvii. 39), as much as to say "Do not ever hope to capture

me!" The insults heaped on *Zion* were really directed against the God of Israel. Sennacherib had claimed his military successes as the work of his own prowess; he had proudly boasted of having overcome all difficulties. If there was a scarcity of water, he digged wells and so drank the water; if the besieged places were protected by a river, he crossed it dryshod. But, Jehovah replies, the victories of the Assyrian King were in reality part of a Divine plan formed long ago, and only now brought to its fulfilment. This was the explanation of the ease with which he conquered. He was but an instrument in the hands of an all-ruling Providence. All his actions were known to and controlled by Jehovah; and at the moment when this wild bull turned his rage against his Master, he would find himself checked by the ring in his nose and be compelled to go back. 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

"And this shall be the sign unto thee": *i.e.*, to Hezekiah, for the writer has ceased to dictate an answer for Sennacherib, and now addresses the Jewish king. The sign was not intended to convince beforehand of the truth of the prophecy, but to prove, after it had been fulfilled, that the event had turned out as predicted (chap. vii. 14). The invasion had prevented the sowing, and there would be no harvest in that year. In the following year (700 B.C.), even supposing Sennacherib had retreated in time, the poverty and desolation of the country would preclude effective sowing. Hence it would not be until the third year (699 B.C.) that the harvest would be gathered in again. And just as the fields would renew their fertility, so would the people also again take root in the land, bear children, and multiply. For out of the beleaguered 30 31 32

city of Jerusalem there would issue forth the "remnant" which had survived the invasion. The
33 Assyrian king's plans would be entirely frustrated. He was destined neither to enter the city in triumph nor to attempt its capture by assault, nor even to
34 raise earthworks for a siege. Probably Sennacherib intended, after successfully terminating his Egyptian campaign, to overrun, on his way home, the hilly country of Judæa. But, if so, that plan was doomed to be frustrated. He would find himself compelled to return by the easy route along the maritime plain, by which he had come. God would defend His
35 people, firstly, in order to vindicate His Majesty against the taunts and insults of the enemy, and secondly, for the sake of His promise made to King David (2 Sam. vii. 12-17).

XXXVII. 36—38. Overthrow and End of Sennacherib.

36 And the angel of the LORD went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when men arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead
37 corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned and dwelt at Nineveh.
38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

It seems most probable that Sennacherib intended to invade Egypt, and that it was on the borders of that country that his army experienced the sudden disaster which necessitated an immediate retreat, and which saved Judæa and Egypt from further invasion for thirty years. The following is the account of the incident as it was told to the Greek traveller and historian Herodotus, who visited Egypt two and a half centuries later. After mentioning that the King of Egypt at that time was the

priest of the god Hephaestus, and that he had alienated the military class by his treatment of it, Herodotus thus continues:—

"But afterwards Sanacharib, King of the Arabians and the Assyrians brought a great host against Egypt. Now the military men of the Egyptians were not disposed to come to his assistance, and so the priest, being driven into a difficulty, went in to the image in the shrine and bewailed the misfortunes which he was in danger of suffering. But in the course of his lamentation sleep came upon him, and the god appeared to stand over him in a vision and to encourage him with the assurance that he would suffer nothing unpleasant if he resisted the Arabian host, since the god himself would send him champions. Confident in these dreams, he took those of the Egyptians who volunteered to follow him and encamped at Pelusium. For here is the entrance to the country. Now, none of the military followed him, but only tradesmen, artizans, and loafers. When they had arrived there, during the night, there poured upon the enemy themselves numbers of field mice, which devoured their quivers, their bows, and the handles of their shields, so that when they fled away next day unarmed, many of them fell. And to this day a marble statue of this king stands in the temple of Hephaestus, bearing a mouse in its hand, and with the following inscription, "WHO LOOKS ON ME, BE REVERENT" (Herod. ii. 141).

Though this tradition is in many ways inconsistent with the Biblical narrative, yet it is important as affording confirmatory evidence that the disaster was not an ordinary defeat in battle, but was regarded by the Egyptians themselves as directly

due to divine interposition. There seems to be little reason for doubting that the visitation was a plague. The text seems to imply that all the 185,000 perished in one night. So the proud boasts of the Assyrian ended in the havoc wrought between sunset and sunrise on that fatal night.

> Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green
> That host with its banners at sunset were seen ;
> Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown
> That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, and the lands of Judæa and Egypt remained unassailed, until his successor Esarhaddon invaded the South of Palestine in the year 672 B.C., carried off Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, to Babylon (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11) and reduced Egypt to the condition of an Assyrian province. Sennacherib himself lived twenty years longer, and conducted several important campaigns, chief among which was his destruction of the city of Babylon. In 680 B.C. he was murdered by two of his sons, who attempted to seize the throne. But a younger son, Esarhaddon, defeated his two brothers in battle and established himself as King.

XIV. 24—27. The Overthrow Foretold.

24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass ; and as I have purposed, so shall it 25 stand : that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their 26 shoulder. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth ; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all 27 the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it ? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back ?

This prophecy represents the defeat of the Assyrians as relieving Judah of the burdens of

subjection, more especially that of tribute. The purpose of Jehovah to vindicate the independence of His people involves the whole earth in the disaster which must befall the Assyrian armies. The nations who are overwhelmed by Sennacherib's victorious advance, suffer that fate in order that the Assyrian power may ultimately be broken in Jehovah's own land of Judah.

XVII. 12—14.

12 Ah, the [1]uproar of many peoples, which roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing 13 of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but he shall rebuke [2]them, and [3]they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before 14 the storm. At eventide behold terror; *and* before the morning [4]they are not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

[1] Or, *multitude*
[2] Heb. *him.*
[3] Heb. *he*
[4] Heb. *he is*

In countless multitudes the hosts of Assyria roll on with a tumultuous onslaught like the roaring of a torrent swollen with storm-water and rushing irresistibly down its rocky bed. But at the rebuke of Jehovah, the Assyrian turns and flees. As the wind blows away the chaff when wheat is winnowed by being thrown into the air on some exposed hill top; or as scurrying clouds of desert sand are driven before a "hot wind from the bare heights in the wilderness, not to fan nor to cleanse" (Jer. iv. 11), so the Assyrian is scattered away before the blast of the rebuke of Jehovah.

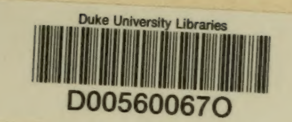
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